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DERWENT HOWARD

PRINT POST APPROVED PP255003/06871

VEGAS NEEDS A SAVIOUR



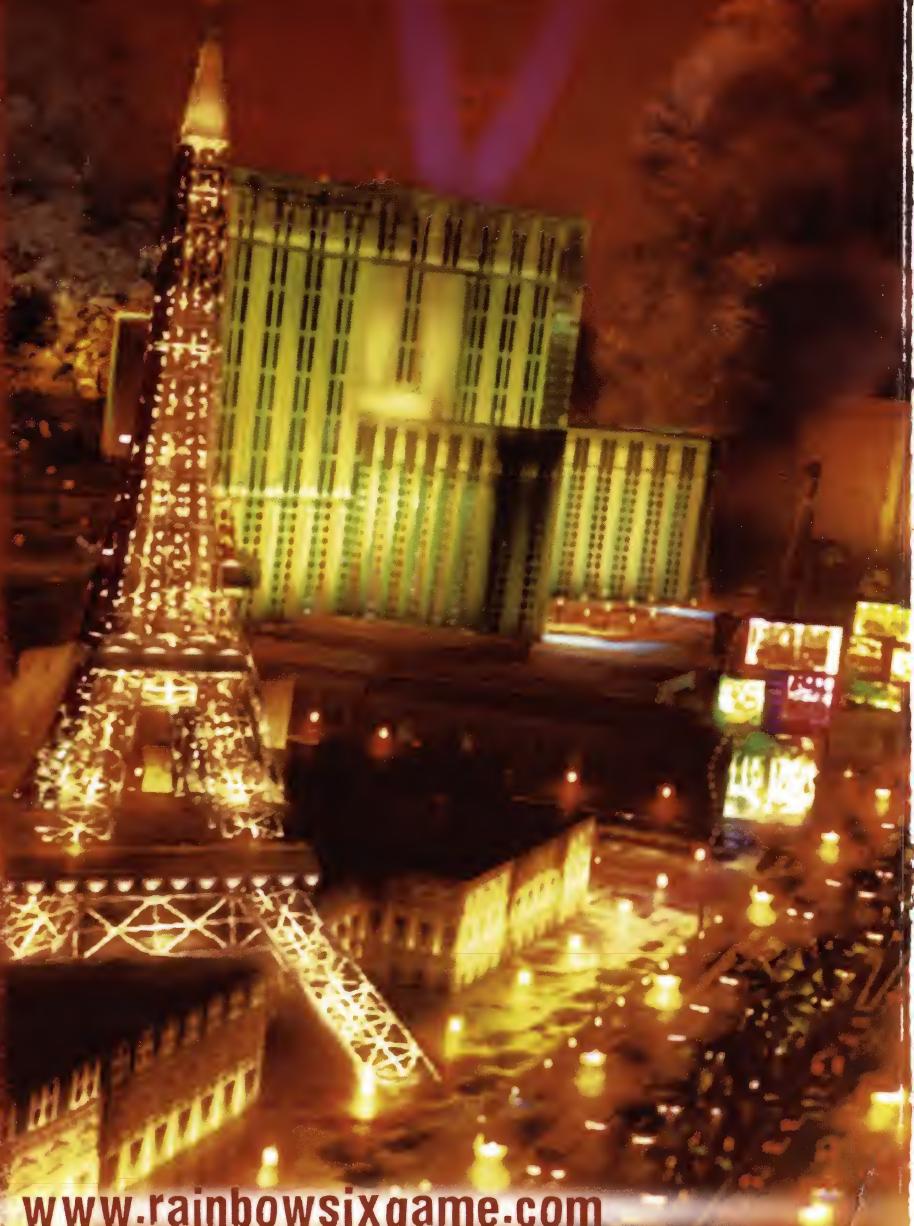
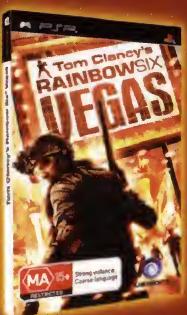
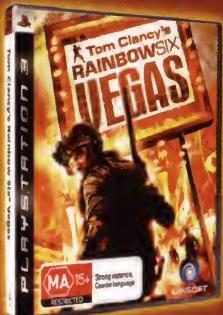
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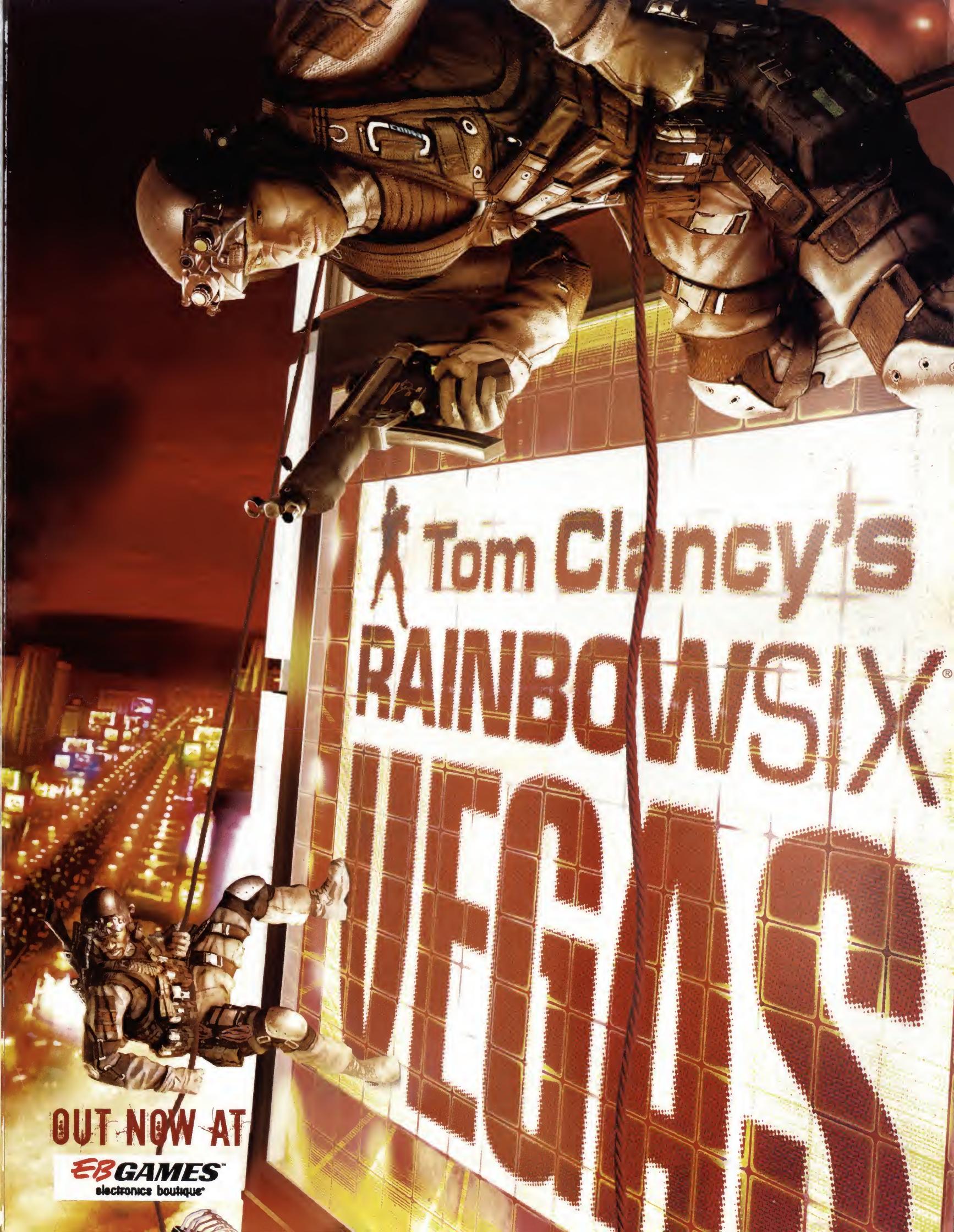


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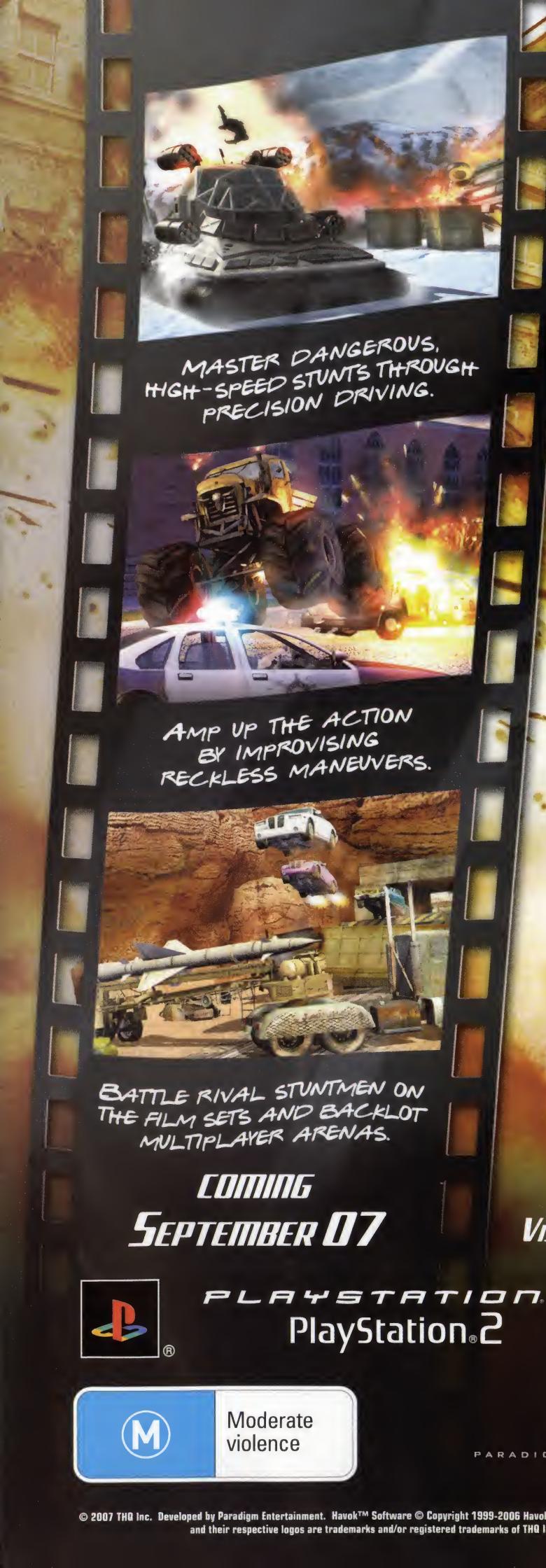
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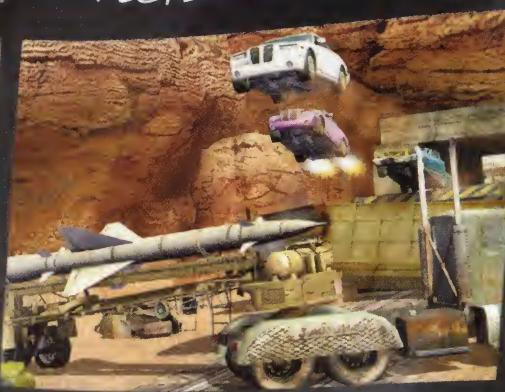
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WIN
a huge HDTV
and *Norbit*
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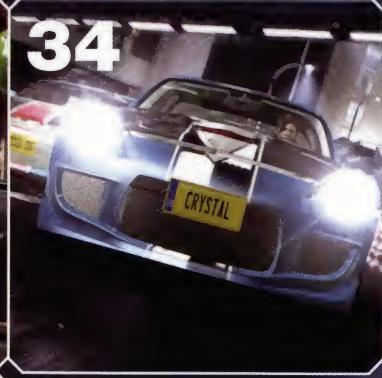
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EDITOR'S LETTER



Talk about slim pickings this month. Although we've had to fight over the paltry handful of crumbs developers have dished up as new releases, there's a gaming feast of epic proportions being cooked up for late 2007. Despite being spoilt for choice there's one game that we're more eager to sink our teeth into than any other, and that's GTAIV. I've just read Luke's preview, which he masterfully crafted and emailed

from New York mere hours after seeing living, breathing GTAIV missions. Why couldn't I give Luke longer to write the story? Well, because we also have to send the magazine to print in a few hours. Yes, these deadlines are insanely tight but they mean our readers will be the first in the world to hear about GTAIV's new gameplay, and there was no way we'd ever pass up an opportunity like that.

After you've read the preview, like me, your mind will be spinning with all the possibilities it opens up. Setting up a job interview was a great way to kill the lawyer but having the freedom to tackle the mission in so many ways is even more exciting. Sniping through the window of a nearby building, planting a bomb under his car and waiting for him to finish work or just strapping on body armour and going in with dual-Uzis are just some of the many options we'll be enjoying later this year. October can't come soon enough.

NARAYAN PATTISON
Editor

PS3 online: [The_Duude](#)

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE IN GTAIV...



LUKE REILLY

Al's Italiano restaurant. There aren't many things better than its pizza. Sure, the novelty of having it recreated in GTAIV would soon wear off, but if you could place an order in the game, that gets bounced out to your local pizza joint for home delivery, then you'd be onto something.

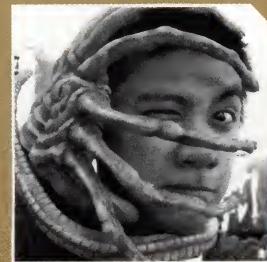
PS3 online: [Capt_Flashheart](#)



MARK SERRELS

How about some more hot coffee? No, idiot, not that kind of hot coffee, actual hot coffee. No, in fact, how about some tea. I love tea. Two sugars and some milk with mine thanks. Sorry, what were we talking about again?

PS3 online: [Serrels](#)



PHILLIP JORGE

Stripping. I know Vice City and San Andreas already had strip clubs in them. I'm not talking about just watching the girls though. I want to be the stripper. There should be a rhythm-based mini game where I get up on stage and ful-Phill the girls' fantasies.

PS3 online: [PhiLLipO](#)



NICK O'SHEA

Being able to square off against Xbox 360 sissies through GTAIV's multiplayer mode. There's never been a cross-platform online game yet, but I can't think of a better way to prove PS3 gamers superior skills over the Micro-softies than via GTA.

PS3 online: [Sidochrome](#)



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

I've been getting into random adventures in *Oblivion*. Why can't we have that kind of caper in GTAIV? Why can't your character stumble across a random crack house/brothel/bent cop that then leads to a series of missions completely unrelated to the main story?

PS3 online: [stoxys242](#)



DAVE KOZICKI

Back up! I'd like to recruit a crew of mercs. Imagine, you're getting axed by the cops, things are grim... you signal your homies and biggiddy-BAM! Dudes start smashing through windows, dropping in from air ducts, ready to unleash hell...

PS3 online: [ko-zee-ii](#)

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EDITORIAL & DESIGN

EDITOR: Narayan Pattison

narayan@derwenthoward.com.au

DEPUTY EDITOR: Luke Reilly

STAFF WRITER: Mark Serrels

Phone: (02) 8305 6921

WRITERS: Dave Kozicki, Anthony O'Connor,

Nick O'Shea, Jessica Greene, James Ellis,

Toby McCasker, Jonti Davis, Michael Butler,

Gerard Ward

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Cook

ART DIRECTOR: Philip Jorge

PUBLISHING & CIRCULATION

GROUP PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Karl Penn

CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES: (02) 8305 6900

SENIOR CIRC AND MARKETING: Lenora Daniel

CIRCULATION CONSULTANT: Danielle Gannan

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Graham Hood

ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR: Nick Cutler

COMMERCIAL MANAGER GAMING: Alex Brereton

alex@derwenthoward.com.au

Phone :: (02) 8305 6909

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Aaron Mailey

aaron@derwenthoward.com.au

Phone :: (02) 8305 6914

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR: Bree Higgerson

HOW TO CONTACT US:

TEL: (02) 8305 6900 **FAX:** (02) 8305 6999

EMAIL: OPS@derwenthoward.com.au

Derwent Howard Pty Ltd

P.O. Box 1037

Bondi Junction NSW 1355

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MANAGEMENT

DIRECTORS: Jim Flynn, Nathan Berkley

FINANCE DIRECTOR: Gary Peroy

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT: Rizka Savitri

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Mild Gambling
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NEWS

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

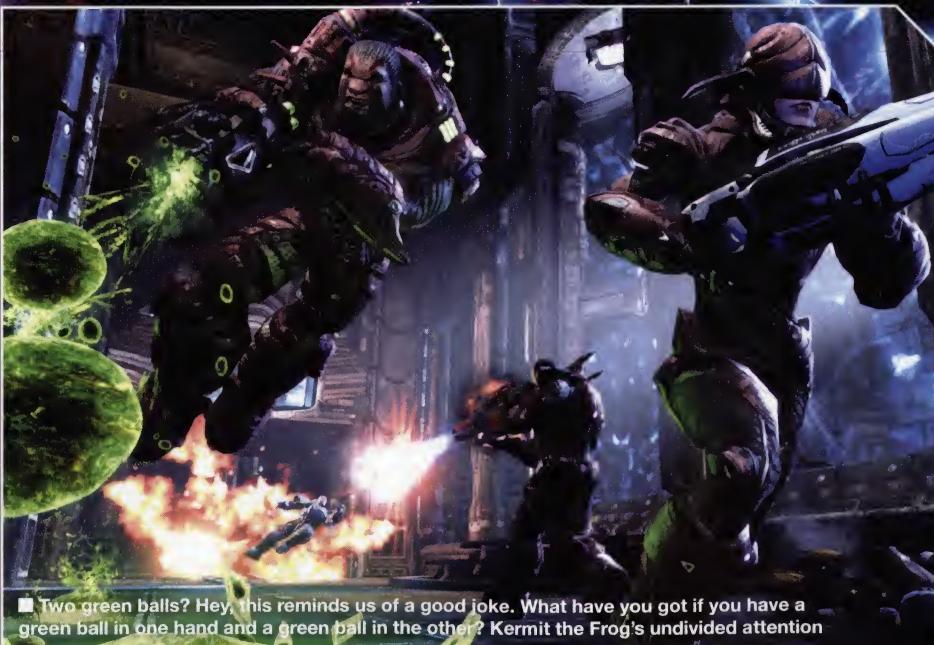
Edited by Mark Serrels

- Guitar Hero III • Metal Gear Anniversary
- The Chronicles of Riddick • SingStar '90s
- Interview with WWE's Kane • and more...



FRIED!

We're thinking this guy is dead. Considering the fact that the bald fella over there has totally blasted the poor dude with some enormous electrical device, survival just really isn't on the cards. RIP random robot man...



FOR THE LATEST GAMING NEWS HEAD TO WWW.GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU



HONOR IS HIS CODE.



PS3 PS2 PSP

ROCK OUT WITH YOUR, UM... SOCK OUT?

Guitar Hero III announces PS3 tour

Well we gave you guys a heads up in Issue 4, but now it's official – *Guitar Hero III* has been announced. It's hard to imagine there will be much tweaking of the perfectly balanced formula that the game is famous for, but take a gander at this song list:

Barracuda – Heart
Cherub – Smashing Pumpkins
Cult of Personality – Living Colour
Knights of Cydonia – Muse
The Metal – Tenacious D

Paint it Black – The Rolling Stones
Rock and Roll All Night – Kiss
Sabotage – Beastie Boys
School's Out – Alice Cooper
Slow Ride – Foghat

And that is just the beginning; rumours abound that Queens of the Stone Age will feature in the game in some shape or form, in addition to Velvet Revolver. How much 'rockin'' can one game hold? Is a spontaneous combustion of sheer 'rockness' on the cards? Dusty Welch, head of publishing at Red Octane, certainly thinks so: "Many of the top bands and songs we've tried to get in the past are now on board, and we've definitely got some giant aces in the hole to say the least."

Aside from a few tweaks to the visuals, and an all-new developer in Neversoft, *Guitar Hero 3* looks set to remain true to previous games in the franchise. New additions include a co-op career mode, and a battle mode where players attempt to outdo each other in the awesome solo stakes, much like that bizarre banjo scene with all the in-bred hicks in *Deliverance*.

Sounds absolutely incredible, almost as amazing as the fact we've gotten to the end of this news item without one reference to *This is Spinal Tap*. Now that is an achievement...



LAYING DOWN THE AXE

In a move that will no doubt get guitar musos world wide all hot and bothered, Activision has announced a new wireless guitar, based on the legendary Gibson Les Paul guitar. There's little difference gameplay wise, but being able to channel the legendary power of Gibson users such as Jimmy Page, B.B. King, The Edge, Slash, and Eric Clapton will undoubtedly be too difficult to resist for the axe-masters amongst you. Looking less like a toy, and closer to a real guitar than any previous iterations of the peripheral, the Les Paul will undoubtedly be a huge selling point for *Guitar Hero 3*.



PS3 PS2 PSP

FAKE REMAKE

While one remake has been announced this month (*Chronicles of Riddick*) another has been denounced, as lead character designer at Square Enix claimed that they are "absolutely not" remaking *Final Fantasy VII* for the PS3. It's a move that will cause fanboys worldwide to simultaneously weep in despair, but hope is a wonderful thing. Fans will no doubt be buoyed by Yoshinori Kitase's claim that since so many of Square-Enix's staff are huge fans of the ground breaking RPG, it's possible that a remake may be considered in the future. So ease off the painkiller overdoses and wrist slitting activites for now kids, and comfort yourself by looking forward to the *Final Fantasy XIII* games, both of which are due for release in 2008.



Everyone's favourite goth, Sephiroth

GIVEAWAY

CAUGHT BY THE FUZZ

If you were one of the millions who found *Shaun of the Dead* to be refreshingly funny, then you will love *Hot Fuzz*, the latest movie offering from the *Spaced* team.

Sgt Nick Angel is the best cop in London, so good, in fact, that they've sent him away to the safest village in England because he's making the rest of the London Metropolitan Police look bad. Cue the hilarity of every cop movie stereotype being replayed within the context of a sleepy English town.

Luckily we have 10 copies of the DVD to giveaway. All you have to do is answer one simple question, and send it to us under the headline 'Hot Fuzz giveaway', then follow the instructions to the right.

Question:
Simon Pegg recently starred with

Tom Cruise in which Hollywood blockbuster?

- a. *Mission Impossible 3*
- b. *Minority Report*
- c. *The Bourne Supremacy*

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close on the 17th of August. All competitions are open to residents of Australia and New Zealand.

WIN!



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

The Church of England hates *Resistance*. Can't stand it. Why, you ask? Because the Manchester Cathedral is in it.

Tony Lloyd, MP for Manchester Central, brought this up during Question Time to get UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to chime in. "Would [you] agree with me then that when Sony used images of Manchester Cathedral as part a game which extols gun violence, this was not only in bad taste but also very, very insulting..." he asked.

Tony agreed. He's good at that, apparently. The Church of England is demanding an apology from Sony for the depiction of Manchester Cathedral in *Resistance*.

This scandal rubbish is well past its use by date. Churches have often been used as war imagery due to their symbolic value. I don't recall anybody moaning when Infinity Ward set a mission in St Mere-Egleise's church during *Call of Duty*. Replace Nazis with aliens and what else has changed?

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

VENGEANCE IS HIS MISSION.



INFO NUDGE

Everything else that's fit to print (and some that's not)

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

Despite taking an age to get to our golden shores, Konami is in the process of creating an online league for the spectacular *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops*. At www.mpolague.com players can get a start on creating their own clan, discussing tactics, and in general preparing for both the league and the three official competitions that Konami is running this year.

IN A HAZE...

So is *Haze* a PS3 exclusive or not? Nobody knows, or at least nobody's telling. As of print time the game is simply "a next gen release", but the murmurings are that Ubisoft and Free Radical are keen to make it exclusive to Sony's big black tower of power. Watch this space: as soon as we get the scoop we'll let you guys know.

KILLING IN THE NAME

The surprisingly above average PSP shooter *Killzone: Liberation* has some free downloadable goodness coming its way, so we suggest that you get right on it sooner rather than later. In addition to some new multiplayer modes, and two new multiplayer maps, a total of four new single-player missions will be available for download.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY SNAKE!

It may be hard to believe, but this year marks the 20th anniversary of the original *Metal Gear*. Yep 20 years of insanely convoluted storytelling, 20 years of Snake surprisingly saying "Metal GEAR?" and pretty much questioning every statement ever made to him over the CODEC. ("My 20th ANNIVERSARY!?!") Maybe he has a hearing problem or something...

To celebrate the birth of one of the greatest franchises in gaming, Konami is planning to re-release every *Metal Gear* game ever made on PlayStation consoles. At the moment this move is specific to Japan, but considering *Metal Gear Solid*'s huge popularity in the west, we're convinced the package will make its way to Australia at some point. Fingers crossed.

PS3 PS2 PSP

BALD MAN ESCAPES FROM PRISON... AGAIN

Starbreeze has recently announced it will be jumping on the next gen remake bandwagon with its classic movie franchise *The Chronicles of Riddick*. Yep, ol' 'shine top' Riddick is making a high definition return, in an attempt to escape from Butcher Bay a second time, this time in a game provisionally titled *Assault on Dark Athena*.

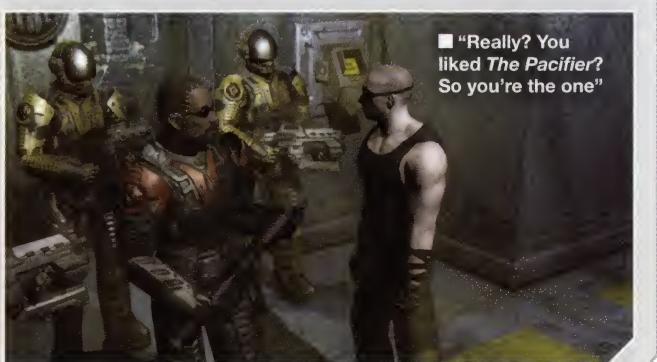
Utilising a game engine similar to the one used in *The Darkness*, *Dark Athena* will have as yet unspecified additional content, and more excitingly a completely new multiplayer mode. It may seem strange to remake a game that still looks spectacular to this day in its original form, but if it worked for *Ninja Gaiden*, we have no doubt it can work for *Riddick*. And besides, playing through a game of this quality with a bit of spit and polish can hardly be a bad thing, especially for those who didn't get a chance to play through the original title.

As of now developer, Starbreeze, has gone all 'Johnny Tight Lips' on us, and 'ain't sayin' nothin' regarding the new multiplayer and single-player content, except to say that it will be super awesome - which we kind of knew already anyway.

More details as we get them, folks.



"Vinnie's nose job business wasn't a roaring success!"



"Really? You liked *The Pacifier*? So you're the one!"

GIVEAWAY

PEDAL TO THE METAL

WIN!

Metal Slug, baby, it's 'da bomb'. If you've frequented any arcade during the last ten years you're sure to have come across one of these bad boys. Mixing the old-school madness of the *Contra* series with a chunky, muscular art design, the *Slug* is one of those arcade gaming experiences that never gets old.

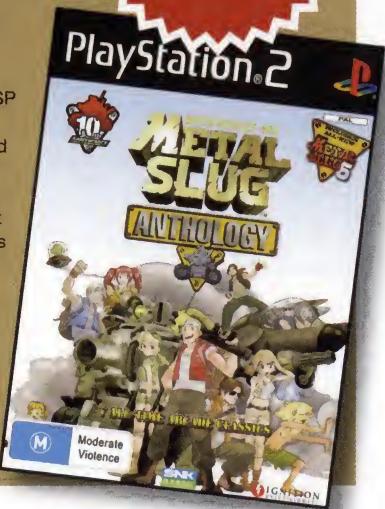
Thank the good lord then that we have copies of the *Metal Slug Anthology* to giveaway. Yeah, we know, we gave some away last month, but those were for the PSP - these are for the PS2!

Anyway, answer this question, and send it to us under the headline 'Metal Slug PS2 Giveaway' following the instructions on page 15. You never know, you may just get the chance to play through all seven games featured in the anthology.

Question:

Metal Slug made its first appearance on which console?

- a. Atari 2600
- b. 3DO
- c. Neo Geo



PS3 PS2 PSP

REACH FOR THE STARS...

It's a big month for music titles, as the release of yet another *SingStar* iteration has been unofficially unveiled. Let out of the bag by those crazy New Zealand retailers, the new *SingStar '90s* appears to have one of the best tracklists seen to date.

We're not sure if the '90s are far enough behind us to evoke the kind of nostalgia that made *SingStar '80s* so successful, but we're convinced that the stellar song line up will more than make up for any misplaced ironic posturing. Check some of these bad boys out:

- Love Shack - B-52's
- One Week - Barenaked Ladies
- Achy Breaky Heart - Billy Ray Cyrus
- Unbelievable - EMF
- Here Comes the Hot Stepper - Ini Kamoze
- U Can't Touch This - MC Hammer
- Bitch - Meredith Brooks
- Step By Step - New Kids On The Block
- Creep - Radiohead
- Everybody Hurts - R.E.M.
- Baby Got Back - Sir Mix-a-lot
- Wannabe - Spice Girls
- Pump Up The Jam - Technotronic feat. Felly
- I Touch Myself - The Divinyls

And that's just some of the '90s goodness heading your way. Expect your girlfriend to be making ears bleed with this collection in time for Christmas.



WINNERS

From the comps in OPS #4

Oblivion (Reader Survey): G Fox, K Stammers, S Dall, K Ozdemir, R Andrew, K Branwell, W Robbins, J Morris, M Kennoway, B Philpott. **Blood Diamond:** G Herrington, G Martin, P Tzannes, B Sharman, N Wilton. **Deadwood:** D Touzel, K McGinley, R Wardell, A Slight, A Reed. **Flags of our Fathers:** L Doncon, C Speer, M Fowlds, J Penrose, L Lee.
All other winners notified by phone or email.



THE TOP 10

Videogame deaths that actually made you wince, cringe or cry like the little bitch you are

By Anthony O'Connor:

- 10 Manhunt – chainsaw evisceration:** There are sooo many deaths to pick from, but ramming the chainsaw into the evil voice-over dude's gut meats is hard to beat.
- 9 Final Fantasy VII – the death of Aeris:** For a title that is, frankly, a little light in the loafers, the big-sword-stabby death of Aeris came as a rude shock for many players.
- 8 Resident Evil 4 – Chainsaw dude:** That whole first village sequence is awesome but the first time you get decapitated you must stand and salute *RE4*'s awesomeness.
- 7 God of War – Hydra go bye-bye:** Killing a boss in a fantastically graphic spray of blood by impaling its heads on wooden spikes is beyond cool.
- 6 Sub Zero... wins:** Sub-Zero rips his opponent's spinal cord out of their body. Come on, what's not to love about that?
- 5 Prince of Persia – the original:** Not *Sands of Time*, but rather the original. The first time your body is mangled on the spikes... well, it was pretty harsh.
- 4 The Punisher – driller killer:** It got a little truncated by our good friends at the OFLC, but of the many torture scenes, drill-bit through the head remains an office favourite.
- 3 Pyramid Head cometh:** From *Silent Hill 2*, Pyramid Head had a large weapon with which he would whack you. Perhaps not gory, but disturbing and dirty nonetheless.
- 2 BloodRayne – blood rage moments:** Ahhh *BloodRayne*. How we loved you before you were an average sequel and an awful movie. Her bullet time style of hacking up Nazis is cool beyond words.
- 1 Hitman – take your pick:** We've played the series to death (excuse the pun) and we're finding it hard to pick. There was that bit with the sword in the Hell nightclub...

BLOODSHED IS HIS ONLY OPTION.

THROUGH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE!

OPS chats with WWE's resident monster heel, Kañé...

OPS: At what age did you discover your love for pro-wrestling?

K: I discovered professional wrestling probably around the time I was 10 years old. I have been hooked ever since.

OPS: Who were your wrestling heroes when you were growing up? What have been your favourite wrestling matches?

K: Some of my wrestling heroes growing up were Harley Race, Bulldog Bob Brown and Ray Candy. A couple of my favourite matches in the WWE have been my first WrestleMania match against The Undertaker (WrestleMania XIV) and my First Blood match against Stone Cold Steve Austin, where I won the WWE Championship.

OPS: Past and present, who have been the major influences on your career, in-ring?

K: I would have to say that two of my biggest influences have been The Undertaker and Hulk Hogan.

OPS: What was it like starring in your own movie *See No Evil*? How does acting compare to wrestling?

K: It was a very cool experience. Acting is extremely different from the ring because there are no fans on an acting set as opposed to a WWE event. The movie set is not as interactive as a WWE show and you don't get the immediate satisfaction of a live crowd reaction.

OPS: What have been some of your worst injuries in the ring?

K: I have torn my bicep, broken my hand, had several concussions, severe cuts and I injured my back so bad once I could not walk.

OPS: How has the travelling life been for you, and what are the pros and cons of it? Do you game on the road?

K: I used to game on the road but not much anymore. Travelling is the worst part of being on the road; we get to go to a lot of great places but don't get to see much.

OPS: What is WWE Chairman Vincent Kennedy McMahon really like?

K: Right now he is ECW champion; he gets to do what he wants because he is the boss.

OPS: You are one of the characters that will be in *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008*. What do you think has changed about videogames over the years?

K: The graphics have gotten much better of course; the WWE games, they have gotten more in depth and storyline driven. The older WWE games were fighting games and button mashers. The new ones are interactive; you can counter moves but there is still all the action you would expect from a WWE game.

OPS: Besides WWE games, what are some of your favourite to play?

K: I am a first-person shooter type gamer. I am a huge fan of the *Ghost Recon* series.

OPS: Elijah Burke just won the THQ Superstar Challenge before this year's WrestleMania. Who would you say is the best gamer in the WWE?

K: Without question Shelton Benjamin and Stevie Richards are probably two of the best gamers in the WWE.



PS3 PS2 PSP

BRICKING IT...

Fans of the kinda awesome LEGO Star Wars rejoice – both the original game and its sequel are headed to the PS3 in one complete package titled *LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga*.

We're not really too sure whether the game will be completely based on the original PS2 games, but *The Complete Saga* apparently takes "full advantage" of the PS3's power and will feature new content regardless.

Containing new levels, new characters and new features all wrapped up in its traditional tongue in cheek humor, *LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga* promises to retain all the charm of the original games. No word on an official release date yet. When we get it, you'll be the first to know.



GIVEAWAY

KEEPIN' IT REEL

www.reeltime.tv is pretty much the best time you can have on the internet without having to delete your cookies in a guilty rush immediately afterwards. Australia's first legal movie and TV downloads service, ReelTime allows you to purchase all kinds of media at dirt cheap prices, with a huge selection that encompasses local Australian content and all the top stuff from overseas as well.

Movies can also be rented via this website, and hard copies of games can be purchased at prices much lower than retail. ReelTime is giving away ten \$100 game vouchers to the lucky bugger who can answer this simple question, and send the answer to us under the headline 'ReelTime Giveaway', following the instructions on page 15.

Question:

In the world of the big bad internet, what does 'www' stand for?

- a. whirly wee willie
- b. winding white wonderland
- c. world wide web



ReelTime

GAME DESIGN 101

Blue vs. Red

The original PlayStation saw off two key rivals for two different reasons. The Sega Saturn was doomed from the start because it wasn't really designed for 3D games. But the Nintendo 64 was doomed from the start because it used cartridges.

The PS3's Blu-ray storage advantage over its rivals has largely been overlooked, but it's no less significant in this generation. Games don't come on cartridges anymore because they need more data. As games get bigger in scope, detail and sophistication, their code bases get bigger. They use higher-resolution textures. They need more voice and sound samples.

Blu-ray's blue laser reads with greater precision than red lasers in DVD and HD-DVD drives, so the discs can hold more information.

This means we won't be seeing multi-disc PS3 releases any time soon. Better yet, it means as developers realise they don't need to limit their ambitions when working on PS3, they'll start filling up those Blu-ray discs with massive, content-and-feature-laden games that draw from a huge data source to deliver the most immersive experiences yet. (It also means that those of us with 1080p HD TVs will enjoy the most gorgeous console graphics ever seen.)

Its storage advantage gives developers the deepest possible range of raw materials to use, which leaves them freer than on any other machine to forget about technical constraints and just let their imaginations run wild.

JOHN WOO PRESENTS STRANGLEHOLD

PAYBACK BEGINS
SEPTEMBER 2007



Strong violence



TOP 10 GAMES CHART



1



Resistance

2



MotorStorm

3



Formula One

Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
4	Spider-Man 3	Adventure	Activision
5	Need for Speed Carbon	Racing	EA
6	Oblivion	RPG	Ubisoft
7	Ridge Racer 7	Racing	Sony
8	Pirates of the Caribbean 3	Adventure	Funtastic
9	F.E.A.R.	Shooter	Vivendi
10	Fight Night Round 3	Sports	EA

RELEASE SCHEDULE



Format	Title	Category	Distributor
AUGUST			
PS3/ PSP	Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	Stuntman: Ignition	Driving	THQ
PS3	Madden NFL 2007	Sports	EA
PS3	Fatal Inertia	Action	Koei
PS2/PS3/PSP	Ratatouille	Action	THQ
PS2	International Cricket Captain II	Sports	Red Ant
PS2	Reel Fishing: The Great Outdoors	Sports	Red Ant
SEPTEMBER			
PS3	Clive Barker's Jericho	Action	Atari
PS3	Lair	Action	Sony
PS3	Heavenly Sword	Action	Sony
PS3	Stranglehold	Action	Red Ant
PS3/PS2/PSP	Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	Driving	THQ
PSP	Dead Head Fred	Action	TBC
PSP	Naruto: Ultimate Ninja	Action	Atari
PSP	Valhalla Nights	RPG	TBC
PSP	Steel Horizons	Strategy	Atari
PS2	Samurai Showdown 6	Action	TBC
OCTOBER			
PS3	Hei\$t	Action	Atari
PS3	Turok	Shooter	Funtastic
PS3	Grand Theft Auto IV	Adventure	Rockstar



GIVEAWAY



DRIVE ME CRAZY



A prequel set two years before the events of *Parallel Lines*, *Driver 76* shrink-wraps the *Driver* experience perfectly into the PSP. With all new missions and content developed specifically for the PSP, *Driver 76* features characters from previous entries in the franchise such as Ray the mechanic and Slink the pimp. Encapsulating the '70s era with a combination of style, music and swagger, this entry into the *Driver* series is the closest you'll get to the funkastic '70s until the advent of time travel.

Thankfully we have 10 copies of this bad boy to give away, and 10 *Driver* T-shirts to throw in. All you have to do is answer this one simple question and send it to us under the headline 'Driver Giveaway', following the instructions on page 15.

Question:

Which '70s soulster threatened to 'Impeach the President'?

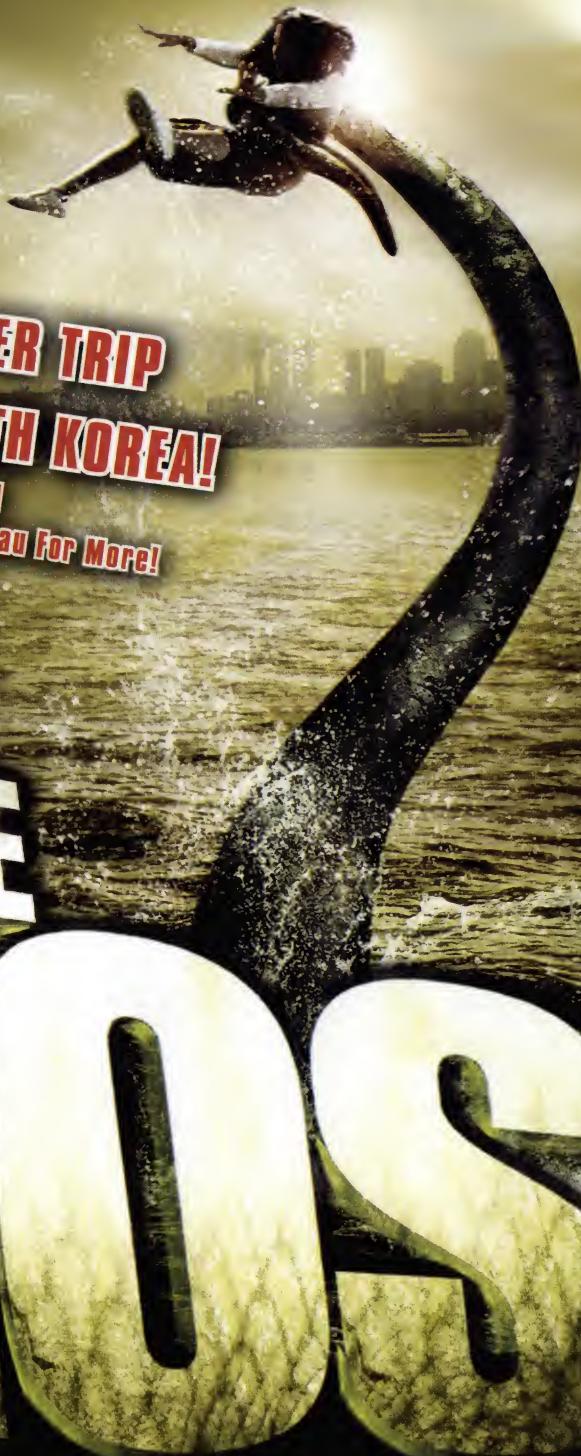
- a. Sly Stone
- b. James Brown
- c. Al Green



WIN!

"It came. They saw. It ate them."

Herald Sun ★★★★



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THE HOST

The Han River runs through the heart of Seoul and when the US military dumps toxic chemicals in the river, a monstrous mutant creature is conceived in its waters. Then suddenly the creature reveals itself...

SURFACING ON  JULY 18 2007



Moderate violence,
Moderate Coarse
Language



EASTERN EYE
ASIAN CINEMA

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Distributed by:
MADMAN
ENTERTAINMENT

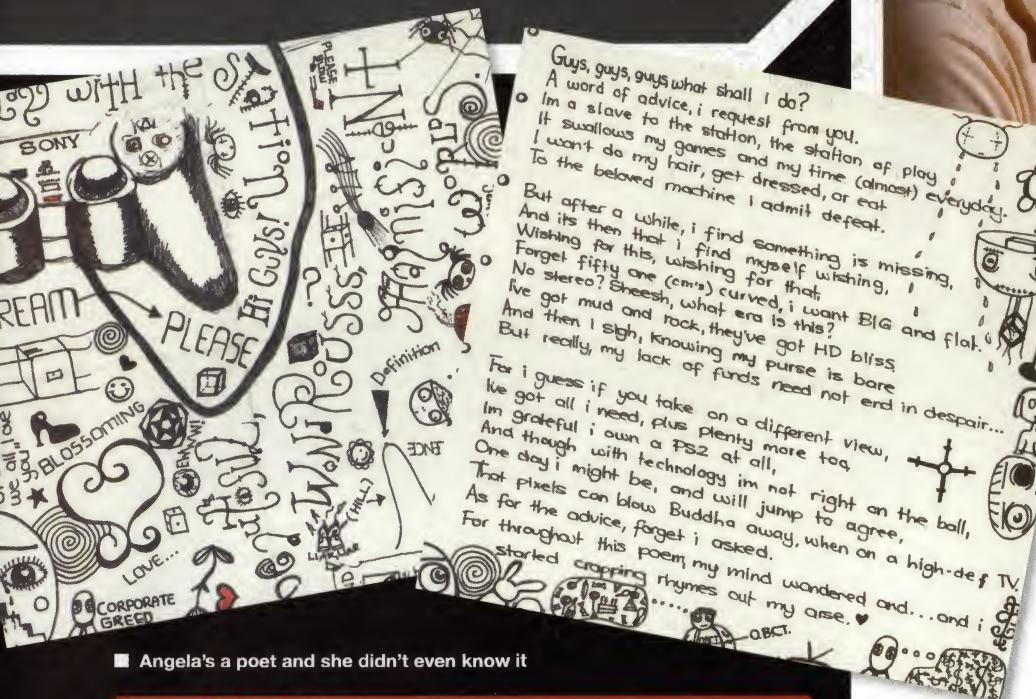
한국영화  SHOWBOX

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Showbox/Mediplex, Inc.



LETTERS

HAVE YOUR SAY & WIN FANTASTIC FOUR



■ Angela's a poet and she didn't even know it

LETTER OF THE MONTH

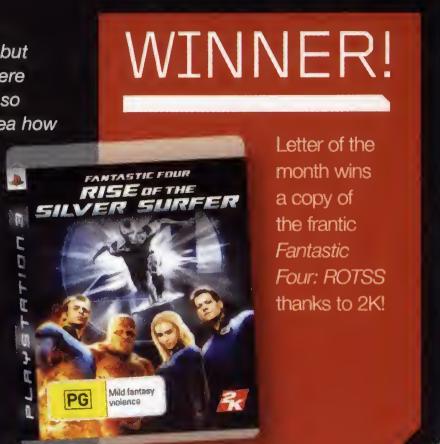
A WORD OF ADVICE

Guys, guys, guys, what shall I do?
A word of advice I request from you.
I'm a slave to the station, the station of play
It swallows my games and my time (almost) everyday
I won't do my hair, get dressed, or eat
To the beloved machine I admit defeat

But after a while I find something is missing
And it's then that I find myself wishing,
Wishing for this, wishing for that,
Forget fifty one curved, I want BIG and flat.
No stereo? Sheesh, what era is this?
I've got mud and rock, they've got HD bliss.
And then I sigh, knowing my purse is bare
But really, my lack of funds need not end in despair...

For I guess if you take on a different view,
I've got all I need, plus plenty more too,
I'm grateful I own a PS2 at all,
And though with technology I'm not right on the ball,
One day I might be, and will jump to agree,
That pixels can blow Buddha away when on a high-def TV
As for the advice, forget I asked.
For throughout this poem, my mind wandered and...
And I started crapping rhymes out my arse.

Angela, everyone totally loved the awesome artwork you sent to us, but we had no earthly idea how we were going to fit it into the mag. It was so unconventional that we had no idea how to make it fit. We decided, however, that since the artwork and the poem you sent was so awesome, we were going to make them fit, dammit! And fit they did! Thanks for that, Angela, and keep up the good work. You're a very talented girl.



■ "You said it was a good size"



PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

PS3 DISC!
1080p & 720p HD

AMAZING 1080p & 720p

**PLAY 4
PS3 GAMES!**

PLAY IT

■ The PS3 demo disc is now ready and awaiting your playing pleasure

WHY ARE WE WAITING

Been meaning to write... sorry for the delay... been gaming. PS2 gaming to be precise, as, yes, I'm one of those who hasn't yet installed the PS3 into my life. Yes, there are many of us out here, believe it or not, still wringing every last drop of gaming greatness out of our beloved chunky black one (unzipping sound... - haven't seen one o' them in a while, 'ey). Getting to my point, if I have a point, now that I've knocked off *GTA: Vice City Stories* and *God of War II* it seems the horizon is somewhat bare of PS2 games. Are there any rippers left in the old girl? Having said that, when the finances allow I'm getting my PS3, and by then there will be a plethora of awesome titles available to buy with my copy of *Assassin's Creed* (looks amazing – great article, Mark). Now, I hate to finish with a bit of a whinge, but if I don't say anything you know it'll just eat both of

We'd like to apologise for the demo disc delay, there were some difficulties getting the whole thing set up, but the new demo disc is here, finally! We hope you guys like it, but please keep us informed of your opinions. We value your input on these things; we want to make the best demos for all readers, so let us know what you think. Oh and we think there are definitely a 'few rippers left in the old girl'! So hold on to your PS2 for a little while yet.

LADIES LOVE COOL OPS

I just wanted to make some comments regarding the topic of the Letter of the Month from May 2007 Issue 3. It is really disappointing to find a lack of content for us girl gamers out there. Personally I like



forward to.

as girl games out there. I personally like games that have you thinking and have a decent story to it and I think that is what the majority of girls like. Maybe you guys could occasionally put in more content about RPGs, strategy and party games, instead of having a lot of war type games, shooters and racing stuff. All in all I love my games, I have heaps in my collection but I do find myself picking up games like *Final Fantasy*, *Silent Hill* and *Dark Cloud* more often than the others. Well that's my say. You guys do a great



job! Keep it up and give Jessica Greene more space in the mag.
Jade Grainger, WA

You know Jade, we love the 'ladies', we love them so much that two letters this month are from members of the fairer sex. Nothing warms our 'cockles' more than girl gamers; I mean what could rate higher on the scale of 'awesome' than playing games with hot girls as opposed to our sweaty mates. In fact, last issue we devoted a whole feature to aid men in their quest to get girlfriends gaming.

SQUARE BROTHERS

I am a huge Square-Enix fan. I have a few ideas for it and some questions. What if it makes an action game (a bit like *Final Fantasy XIII Versus*) but with characters from all the games it's released. Imagine Sora Vs Vaan or Cloud Vs Tidus, or match-ups from other Square Enix games such as *Kingdom Hearts*, *Dragon Quest*, or the *Secret of Mana* series. And what if it remade the old

Final Fantasy games on PS3?
Jonathan, WA

Yeah, Jonathan, sort of like a Smash Brothers for Square-Enix. We reckon that could totally work and we'd love to play it. Especially since we are desperate to put the hurtin' on all of those sissy metrosexual Final Fantasy characters, starting with that girly-boy Vaan. Plus, imaging pile-driving Cloud head-first through that enormous sword of his. As for the remakes of past Final Fantasy games, well, despite the lack of any concrete confirmations, a remake of VII has been rumoured for aaaaaaaaages. We can only hope these rumours come to fruition.

RANDOM

Hey guys, I have had my PS3 since launch and have read each issue of your magazine. Upon reading your magazine I have realised something... It seems that in the first year of the PS3 it will have better games than the entire catalogue of the PS2. YAY! The games I am most looking forward to are

GTAIV, Assassin's Creed, Tony Hawk 9, Skate and The Darkness. I have already got Resistance, Oblivion and my dad has Blazing Angels.

Cheerio then.

P.S. I am a pretty random guy so here a some pretty random words... toaster, giraffe, android, fire, children, skatepark, paper, skull, ultimate, skulultimate, faith, Matthew, seven and dust.

Tom, via email

Monkey, flaccid, blunderbuss, rain, sprain, cauliflower, and Jeremy. Those are some of our favourite words. And yes, the Christmas PS3 line-up is looking hotter than a Scarlett Johansson vs Angelina Jolie wrestling match in an enormous bubble bath. Except they don't fight, they just tickle each other and jiggle. Yeah we better stop there before

this whole letter thing gets any weirder, if that's possible...

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

SIMPLE QUESTION, SIMPLE ANSWER

I have a question: will GTAIV have a multiplayer?
Lok, QLD

We have an answer: yes.

RESISTANCE IS FUTILE

Will there be any sequels to *Resistance: Fall of Man*?

Of course there has been nothing announced as of yet, but given the fact that the game was awesome, and sold extremely well, we think a sequel to *Resistance: Fall of Man* is a total certainty. Count on it.

CAPTAIN OBVIOUS

I don't know which game to save for between *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* and *NBA Street Home Court*, which do you think is the better game?

Come on, man. Do you really need to ask? Mind numbing mediocrity, or excellence, splendor and one of the best gaming experiences around? That's your choice right there. Oblivion is one of the best games ever, and NBA Street is, um, an average sports sim?

SERIOUSLY GTA

When I watched the GTAIV trailer and read your preview I came across something that disturbed me. Is GTAIV becoming a more serious game with less jokes and humor? Please tell me this is not true. If I will have to play a grumpy, boring Russian I probably won't buy GTAIV.
Paul Menezes

It's not true.

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback

Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

INSIDE GAMING

MARK GETS 'GRITTY' WITH 'NIKO' FROM GTA IV...

Mark: Hi Niko, first things first: how does it feel to be the star of GTAIV?

Niko: It feel very nice. But Niko always big star. In own country, Niko most famous man in Russia, he drink vodka with many naked women, while wearing big furry hat and y-front underpants. But in Russia most women be having, how you say, moustache? So Niko must leave Russia for America, find woman with no hair on upper lip.

Mark: So now you've spent some time in America, what are your first impressions?

Niko: Niko very disappointed. Niko think things will be different in America. Niko wrong. I watch the MTV in Russia, and

there many sexy lady with big booty and nice face. I see this and want get jiggy with USA lady, but Niko sad to find out this only TV. All American woman have fat stomach from watching too much Oprah.

Mark: Maybe you should have come to Australia instead?

Niko: What is this Australia? Are there many beautiful women in your country? Niko hear Australia is land of giant lady, and many kangaroo. So is very dangerous for Niko. Also Niko hear vegemite is disgusting food. Niko hate 'barbie' and shrimp, he hear about Australian throwing 'shrimp on barbie'. So he no want to come. Also Niko's cousin in Liberty City in USA, that main reason why I go USA.



Mark: Ah, you must be talking about Roman, he's a cheeky little scamp isn't he?

Niko: He no scamp. He, how you say, lying bastard? Roman say he have three girlfriend and many Jacuzzi, but this bullshit. He poor and stupid man, with ugly girlfriend, who is also prostitute.

Mark: And... we'll leave it there Niko. Thanks for your time.

Niko: No is problem, Niko happy to help.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING
■ PLAYERS: 1-TBA
■ RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA
■ DEVELOPER: EA BLACK BOX
■ WEB: www.ea.com



■ "Do you come with the car?" "Oh you!" "Do you come with the car?" "Oh you!" "Do you..." "Oh, bite me!"

NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET

From show to go...

Street racing is all grown up. Back in the day it was a cute li'l kid from the wrong side of the tracks, a little rough around the edges, but we loved it. But then it hit puberty, and all the complications that come with it. Sure it was the same old kid, but it was a little more of a handful – with zits all over its dial and a surly attitude. Frankly, it got a little too much to handle, and we found ourselves wishing for something a little different, a little more grown up...

So where the hell are we going with all this random allegorical nonsense? Do we have a point? Oh yeah, *Need*

For Speed ProStreet has now dropped its illegal racing concept and taken the cars off the streets and onto the track. Ditching the tired and dated underground skew gives the racing a far greater sense of legitimacy. We touched on this when we commended *Juiced 2*'s change of direction, and predicted *Need for Speed* would need to act similarly to stay on top of shifting audience tastes.

Fortunately, EA proved us right.

SMOKIN'

ProStreet is a completely new move for the franchise – designed, tweaked and tailored to remain in line with where

street racing culture is headed. All those spoilt little petrol-head kids seem to have grown a little tired of getting busted by Officer Leroy and the doughnut crew and have gone legit. Now they're organising huge festivals, with multi-disciplinary race events that allow them to legally drive as fast as they want, without fear of the boys in blue.

What we've seen of the game so far completely reflects this party environment. Screens and videos of *ProStreet* show huge inflatables soaring across the sky, banners, and massive crowds; almost like NASCAR for a new generation. It's a completely new atmosphere for a

completely new game.

SMASHING, BABY

While *ProStreet* still has its roots in illegal racing, the move from the street to the track has forced EA's hand a little and is pushing the game from its arcade aesthetic towards something resembling realism. The most significant step in this direction is undoubtedly the inclusion of damage – the number one fan request according to the developer. Damage, undoubtedly a major theme for almost all next gen racers, features prominently in *ProStreet*. If what we've seen so far is anything to go by, we could be looking at





INFO BYTE

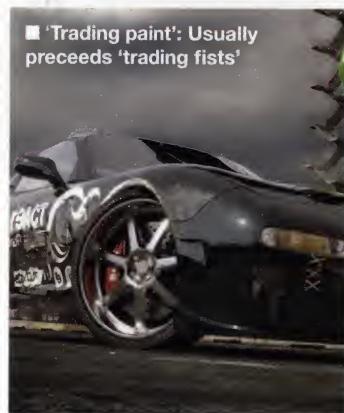
Ex-Big Brother hottie Krystal and her pert assets are set to play a huge role in *Need for Speed ProStreet*. Keep your eyes peeled.

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD...

Now that *Need for Speed ProStreet* has taken racing out of the street, will this mean the end for numerous other heinous media incarnations of illegal road racing? We certainly hope so. Imagine, if you will, a world without *The Fast and The Furious*, a world united in peace, with no Paul Walker to divide us from our girlfriends, no Vin Diesel mumbling his way through half-arsed 'comedies', and no Michelle Rodriguez acting all feisty in every single part she plays. Ah... what a wonderful world that would be...



■ 'Trading paint': Usually precedes 'trading fists'



the leader of the pack.

The damage models truly are something to behold. Panels crumple, body work bends and glass explodes – bouncing all over road. Even the paint on your pride and joy can get scratched. Sadly the option to 'key' your opponent's vehicle has not yet been announced.

EA has also put a stack of effort into nailing an aspect of racing games no developer has ever got quite right – smoke. Thick, white plumes billow from spinning tyres and linger in wheel wells. As long as it hangs in the air for more than just a few seconds we'll be happy. Damage is a big part of *ProStreet*'s attempt to recreate the claustrophobia and immediacy of actual racing, but seemingly minor elements like accurate smoke effects can't be underestimated. The effects we saw almost seemed photo-realistic, and were the first thing that leapt out as we gazed upon the most recent screenshots.

OUT WITH THE OLD

We are interested to see how this fresh new direction will affect the core gameplay. The *Need for Speed* franchise was built on numerous aspects that will no doubt be removed from *ProStreet*. Police evasion, for example, will be completely absent from the game. The free roaming dimension that was featured

so prominently in *Carbon* also looks to be missing in action from *ProStreet*, due to the fact that most of your racing will take place at weekend driving meets.

SO, WHAT ELSE?

We suspect there will be a stronger focus upon vehicle customisation and driving physics. We were also privy to a new wind tunnel feature – while your car is in this tunnel you can add and remove parts, tweaking them to create the most aerodynamic car possible. Many driving games give players the option to customise, but few give you the chance to see the actual effects of customisation. Through this feature, players can see how their upgrades will affect the car directly.

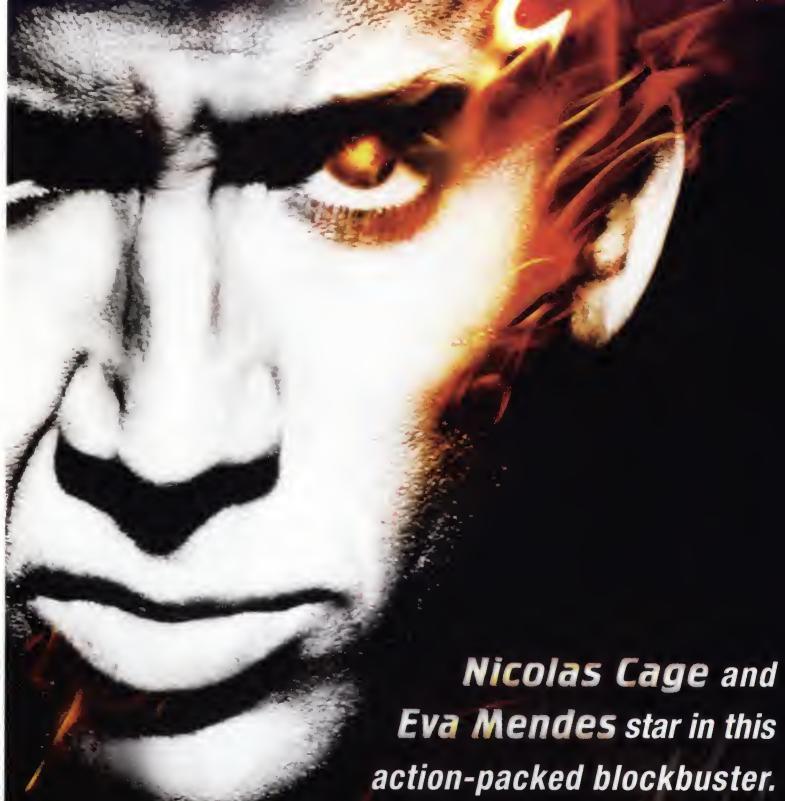
Overall, we're a tad excited. EA has taken a series on the verge of becoming stale and reinvented it. *Need for Speed* has adapted and we can't wait to see the results. ■ **Mark Serrels**

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The *Fast and the Furious* vibe is dated, and the culture has matured. *ProStreet* is a reflection of that."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A fresh new direction and hot new graphics, we're interested to see how the *NFS* dynamic adjusts.



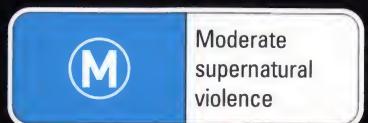
Nicolas Cage and Eva Mendes star in this action-packed blockbuster.

GHOST RIDER ONE HELL OF A RIDE



Extended edition includes 15 minutes of additional footage.

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Moderate
supernatural
violence

MARVEL

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Crooner?

Diva?

Comedian?

PG

Mild Sexual
References

singstargame.com

singstar

Entertainer?

shy...?



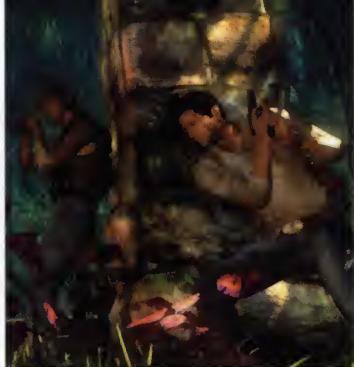
inside everyone there's a SingStar

Challenge your friends to the perfect pop showdown. Whether you're a born entertainer or a classic crooner, step up to the mic and get the party started. Join pop's biggest stars, and sing to win. Surprise yourself and your friends. Which SingStar are you?



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE: Q4 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
■ DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
■ WEB: www.naughtydog.com



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

X never, ever marks the spot...

Something weird happened. We've been aching to get our hands on this game from the moment we laid eyes on it. For as long as we can recall we've been trying to convince somebody – anybody – to give us another glimpse. Our begging was fruitless. We were thwarted at every turn. Our hopes lay shattered, just as our dreams of becoming astronauts and sex detectives had been smashed in the past.

And then, suddenly, we were actually playing it.

SUDDENLY?

Indeed. We had no idea we were about to try it. We were ushered into a dark room, slipped a SIXAXIS and set loose. It was a very pleasant surprise. Needless to say, we were a little energised and immediately set about putting *Uncharted's* 'Dude Raider' Nathan Drake through his paces.

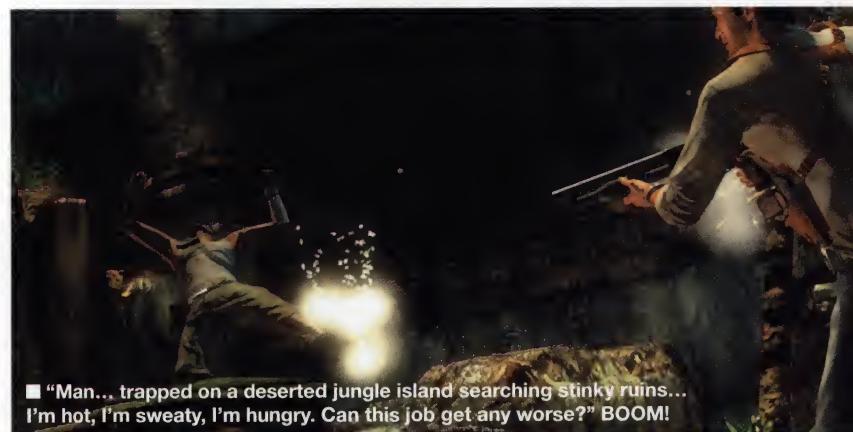
Our first thought was what an incredible looking game this is – the visuals are quite remarkable. *Uncharted* truly speaks volumes about the kind of quality we should be able to expect from the second wave of PS3 titles. The jungle environments were unbelievably lush and the stone ruins staggeringly detailed – but most impressive of all are the characters themselves. Courtesy of some proprietary Naughty Dog technology the crew has dubbed a Wrinkle Mapping Facial Animation system, characters are able to express a wide range of emotion via complex facial

expressions. Combined with some of the most advanced animation we've ever seen, it results in what's perhaps the most lifelike avatar yet. The cutting-edge facial animations mean Drake can react dynamically to what's occurring around him. Hunkered down behind a wall, Drake will flinch and wince slightly each time a bullet ricochets off the rocks. Hanging from tough ledges, Drake will grimace from the strain and exertion. Under withering fire, his eyes will widen with concern, although in close quarters combat with enemies his expression darkens and his eyes narrow with steely intent.

However, the completely seamless animation system is arguably even more impressive. Running around, it becomes incredibly clear just how silky smooth the animation is, and how it subtly adapts to any given situation. Reloading while running isn't quite the same as reloading while stationary, or crouched, or pressed against a wall...

It's so fluid, in fact, that you just may miss it.

If you're fired upon while sprinting across an open area, Drake will hunch over to avoid being hit. Come to a small step and Drake will nonchalantly spring onto it, yet hit a waist high obstacle and



■ "Man... trapped on a deserted jungle island searching stinky ruins... I'm hot, I'm sweaty, I'm hungry. Can this job get any worse?" BOOM!



■ Bullets whizzing by, Nathan paused to scratch his nose. It would prove costly



■ Pirates. They look a lot less like Johnny Depp these days



■ "Baby, can we get stuck into the home movies after we land? I've got my hands tied, you know... flying the plane"

he'll bring his knee up, hurdle across it and continue running. *Uncharted* features the most natural, free-flowing movement system we've seen since *Prince of Persia* – whether you're scrambling across fallen logs or drop-kicking pirates in the face, you'll believe every second of it.

BUT WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

Nathan Drake, *Uncharted*'s everyman protagonist, sets about on a hunt for the fabled treasure of El Dorado. A 400-year-old clue in the coffin of Sir Francis Drake leads him, and his companion Elana Fisher, to a forgotten island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately for Drake and Elana, the island is crawling with mercenaries and pirates, their plane is shot down and they're separated. Vastly outnumbered and outgunned, Drake must make the best of a bad situation and save the girl (we predict) and his own skin.

Best not to let Drake's unconventionally slight build deceive you either. He's certainly a far cry from the muscle-bound lugs normally featured in videogames, but that doesn't mean he can't take care of himself. He's still quite capable with a pistol in his palm, or an assault rifle tucked in his armpit. We found the shooting controls had a lot to thank the likes of *Freedom Fighters* and *Resident Evil*.

4... for. Pulling up a manual aim brings the camera down from its regular third-person perspective to hover behind Drake's right shoulder. Coupled with the ability to seek cover behind most objects, it's a satisfying system.

We did have a few quibbles however. Our main gripe concerned the number of bullets enemies were able to absorb (in the head, no less) before finally going down. Also, the grenades are useless because they beep for a few seconds before they detonate (and hence, your potential victims leave the area, the grenade explodes and kills NOBODY). These sorts of things are easily fine-tuned, and we hope they will be.

For the most part though we were mightily pleased. *Uncharted* isn't just on track to be a good game. It's the right game. It's shaping up to be a slick, compelling, cinematic action-adventure with a likeable and, most importantly, believable lead. It's accessible. It's exciting. It looks amazing. It's exclusive to PS3. It's not an FPS. It's already quite nearly the perfect PS3 game, and it's not even out yet. We don't want to put the horse before the cart here, but *Uncharted* looks the business – and with Naughty Dog at the helm we're expecting a final product that's nothing less than astounding. □ Luke Reilly



INFO BYTE

Main character Nathan Drake shares his first name with Sgt. Nathan Hale, the lead in Insomniac's *Resistance: Fall of Man*. Insomniac and Naughty Dog often refer to each other's games, although this could be a coincidence.



■ "Errr..., this is not what it looks like" "Really, it looks like you're beating my friend senseless." "It does? Fair call – actually, that's exactly what I'm doing. My bad"



■ "You there! Come down from there or I'll... continue shining my... my giant torch at you. Don't make me do it man"

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "A fallible hero akin to those depicted in pulp-adventure genre films, Nathan Drake brings a humanity and believability never seen before in videogaming..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Naughty Dog hasn't made a bad game since 1994. This shouldn't ruin the record.

"A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR ME!"

Considered a hero in England but despised by the Spanish, biographies of Sir Francis Drake are usually either loaded with praise for the privateer's treasure-hunting, Spaniard-sacking, new-stuff-discovering exploits – or scathing recounts of his more nefarious deeds (of which there were quite a few). He was a noted explorer, no doubt, but he was also a slave trader, a pirate and was part of an English plantation effort in Ireland where 600 men, women and children were massacred after surrendering (he was there to keep Scottish ships from bringing reinforcements to the area).





The 2006 Game of the Year comes to PlayStation®3



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Official PlayStation® Magazine



“This is exactly what a next-gen game should look like”

Official PlayStation® Magazine



oblivion.ubi.com



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fantasy
violence



PLAYSTATION 3

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The Elder Scrolls IV
OBLIVION®

The RPG for the Next Generation

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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE: LATE 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: VIVENDI
■ DEVELOPER: SABER INTERACTIVE
■ WEB: www.timeshiftgame.com



■ Josh refused to quit the army despite his chronic narcolepsy

TIMESHIFT

Time waits for no man... except you

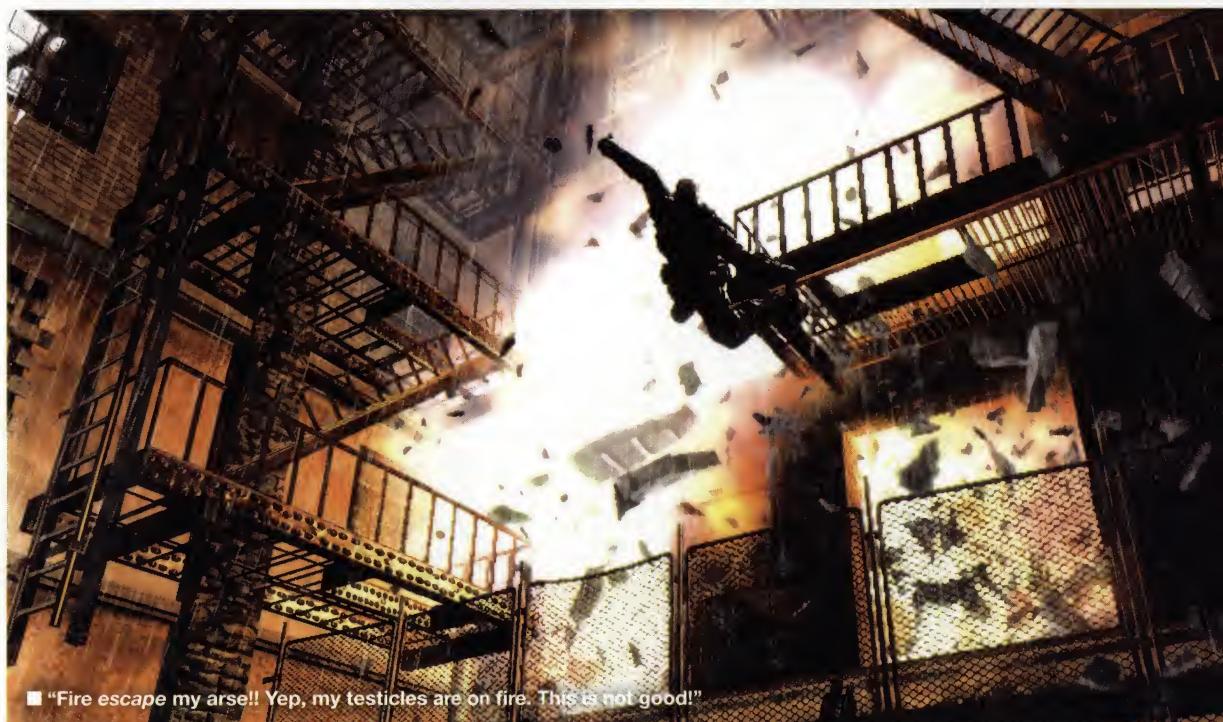
Time. In any form of literature or popular media, it's a concept that has fascinated mankind for as long as there's been a record of time itself. Whether it's travelling into a distant future and seeing vast technological advances, or jumping back to the past to change the fate of humanity, it's something that grabs you at the core. It's that whole "making up for past mistakes" philosophy, or even avoiding new ones, that never seems to lose its appeal.

One of the biggest TV shows of the moment, *Heroes*, deals with these concepts of redemption and atonement via the whimsical journeys of its herald, the incomparable Hiro Nakamura and his time/space altering gifts. Transfer this over to gaming and it's a whole new kettle of fish. Ever since *Max Payne*, "Bullet Time", or simply altering time has become as commonplace as dual-wielding weapons, or having a jump button.

Look at some of the best games of the last year – *F.E.A.R.*, *God of War II* and now *Timeshift*, all give a tip of the cap to time manipulation. In fact, Saber Interactive seems to have had a hand in a reversal of time. When the release of *Timeshift* was imminent, it froze time, took stock of itself, and gave its team the opportunity of a lifetime... a chance to check under the hood, and have a tinker around for a year or so to rough out the kinks. Sure, the public, as we do, got pissed at the lengthy delay, however, the time was not spent in vain and what we see on the horizon is looking pretty damn good. Take a pause, have a gander below and take the time to find out why...

FREEZE!

Timeshift is an FPS set in an alternative timeline. The



■ "Fire escape my arse!! Yep, my testicles are on fire. This is not good!"

"Time freezes, you weave your way through the raindrops poised midair as you grab the first guard's weapon [and] introduce him to a few bullets"

evil Krone has invaded your country, with little resistance. A rebellion has formed, but cannot hope to compete against Krone's mighty arsenal.

Here's where you come in. Decked out in your S.A.M. suit that allows you to control and manipulate time, you are humanity's last hope. We know what you're all saying... "Been there, killed that" or, "Haven't I played this game a thousand times before?" No, you haven't.

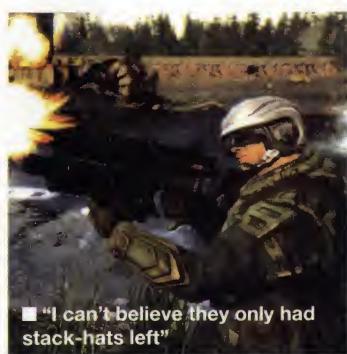
Where *Timeshift* differs is the level of interactivity with the environment and your amazing abilities. Most of the background is interactive and highly destructible. Use it at your leisure to hold defensive positions or to distract and maim your adversaries, all thanks to the beauty of the Havoc engine. It doesn't stop there though. Your time altering abilities, via your suit, are powered by dark matter which recharges every 40 seconds or so, leaving you with a myriad of possibilities to diffuse or ignite situations.

ER... WHERE'D YOU GO?

The latest trailer shows off just a hint of what's on the cards. A lone soldier materialises on a destitute street, amidst a once thriving, now obviously war-ravaged district. Sheets of rain blanket the city, giving an opportunity to see the speed of time as it slows down, pauses and resumes, before our hero joins the fight.

A dozen or so guards are massacring to their heart's content until you shimmer into the fray. It's very much *The Matrix Revolutions* as you race along the rain-soaked streets closing in on your targets. You dispatch the first two guys with extreme prejudice, the old-fashioned way, running and gunning, then it's Bullet Time, baby! You casually throw away your machine gun, activate your S.A.M. suit and bang – it's party time.

Time freezes, you weave your way through the raindrops poised midair as you grab the first guard's weapon, introduce him to a few bullets, and then



■ "I can't believe they only had stack-hats left"

INFO BYTE

We're pleased to announce that *Timeshift* will be yet another game to boast Full HD 1080p, so the visuals should really pop!



■ "Hey Bob, does this Mech suit make my arse look fat?"



■ "I just don't think they're seeing us in the right light"

WHAT THEY SAY:

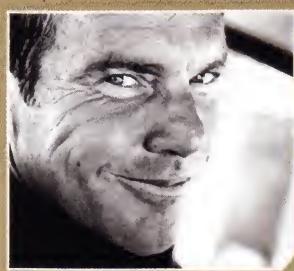
■ "TimeShift will offer a visceral new experience unlike any [you] have ever seen or played before."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ *Timeshift* is looking very impressive right now. The extra time hasn't been wasted. The normal one trick pony – Bullet Time – has been given a whole new playing field.

YOU'RE THE VOICE

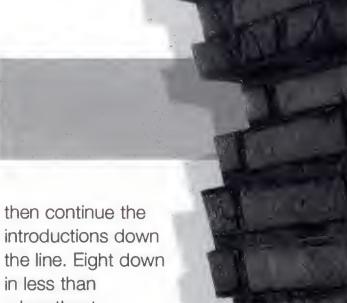
With so many Hollywood stars lending their vocal cords to the gaming industry, it should be of little surprise to see the calibre of talent on offer in *Timeshift*. Sabre's breaking out the big guns! Dennis Quaid, from the now classic *Innerspace*, takes on the duties of protagonist, Colonel Michael Swift. Duking it out in the opposing corner is a certified heavyweight, and a long time *OPS* favourite. Playing scientist Professor Krone, is the irrepressible, sensational, silver-tongued devil himself... Michael Ironside.



then continue the introductions down the line. Eight down in less than a heartbeat...

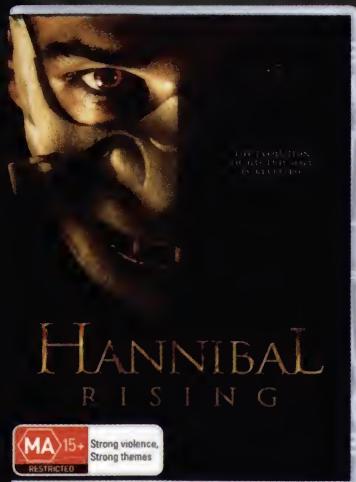
Quick takedowns are definitely the order of the day. Though you can deal with guards, with relative ease, they are no mere cannon fodder. They will switch hands if injured, and once weaponless, will look for cover and an alternative device to continue on with the killing, so make them pay quickly.

After the battle time resumes, you find yourself gazing down the barrel of a tank. A shell comes your way. It's time to rewind. As the rain slowly crawls up to the heavens, you pinch a few hand grenades off a guard, follow the shell back to its origin, toss a couple down the barrel and casually walk away waiting for the inevitable "Hey I'm so cool, I can just saunter off without paying attention, firm in the belief that the tank will explode the moment time is restored." Sure enough, three seconds later KABLAMMO! No more tank. We thought we heard a quip in an Arnie voice along the lines of "Tanks for da memories." We hope so. ■ **Dave Kozicki**



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MA 15+ Strong violence,
Strong themes
RESTRICTED

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING
■ PLAYERS: 1 (1-8 ONLINE)
■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
■ DEVELOPER: JUICE GAMES
■ WEB: www.juiced2chin.com



Check out the Opera House glimpse in the background



JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS

Juicy cars. Juicy chicks. Sign us up!

There's nothing lower than trying to entrance scores of lonely and sexually starved gaming fans by baiting them with images of glorious street machines, decked to the nines, drifting around sparkling tracks littered with cherry-bosomed babes – tantalising barely-clothed she-vixens – who giggle and jiggle from under their teeny skirts. Nothing lower.

But after seeing *Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights* in action on PlayStation 3, if low is what we have to be to get our mitts on

this game and those sirens on our screen, call us Gary Coleman (you know, the little bloke from *Different Strokes* – "What you talkin' 'bout, Willis?" and so on. Oh, just google the punk).

Juiced 2 is revving itself up to tickle your testisatchel. And we mean that in a good way. A lightly sautéed automobile dish of street tramp and four-wheeled bling to be washed down with a shot of nitrous, it's currently looking every part like the next gen racing game tarmac pilgrims have been pining for. Not that it's

a *Gran Turismo* rival. The fictional tracks and constant nitrous boosting ensure that. Yet it's not as liberal as the lunatic dodgem carnival that is the *Burnout* series. *Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights* sits in the middle, brandishing a tough racing engine that doesn't allow you to reduce braking or racing lines to an after thought, while peacock its high speeds and hairpin slides.

When your toes curl at your first glimpse of this game, however, it'll be due to the high-tech sights and sounds





■ Never bet on black



■ "Johnson's failed to disengage the parking brake. This will be costly"



■ Finally, something decent to see at the Opera House

that feature stunningly lit backdrops, crisp and moody lighting effects, and car models intricate enough to make a grown man froth. Sharp contours, a sound sense of weight and inertia, and all the details imaginable adorn these howling rubber-footed hounds, each one looking smarter than the next. Slipping into the improved first-person perspective (that now includes a dash and customisable steering wheel) grants a shiner of a racing experience as cars barge past you on either side while you're striving for maximum speed around the next corner. The lone visual domain we're hoping Juice Games will optimise is the frame rate, which stuttered occasionally with the preview build we played. As the game is still a few months off we're presuming that's on the cards.

That's far from all there is to *Juiced 2*, though. The hot 'thang' at the moment in street racing is drifting, as made famous by cinematic graffiti such as *Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*. Here the drivers fiddle with their car's fiddly bits and tyres, tightening the suspension so they could feel it if they ran over a Tic Tac, then they take to the track and perform a host of impossible figure-8 slides and other sideways driving. In *Juiced 2*, the more drifting you do during a race, the more nitrous you earn. Unlike *Burnout*, however,

drifting around some of these tracks is far from a walk in the park.

Apart from upping the depth of this technique, the game also features several specific drift events that see you scrapping for points as you attempt to achieve maximum drift through the game's fantasy tracks. The car physics have been tinkered here to make drifting easier than during a standard race, but nevertheless pulling off massive million point combos will take all but the most innately gifted drifter some time to master. The drifting tracks are also set amidst fantasy locations rather than the concrete ponds of real drifting. One track we saw was in the shape of a figure 8 that wound its way through the legs of France's Eiffel tower. Hopefully we'll score a few Australian drift tracks by the time the game gets released. How about doughnuts on the Great Barrier Reef?

Familiar features from the original *Juiced* game will also be reprised. Once again customisation plays a massive part in the game, with *Juiced 2* offering a fat library of decals, exhausts, mags, rear spoilers – you get the idea. As mentioned, the steering wheel can now even be chopped and changed to spice up the in-car racing view.

After you've emptied your game credits and packed out your garage



■ "Yep, Jack's cut my brake-line again. What a kidder"

it's time to hit the street, either against the computer or online against fellow bumper boffins. Just don't be too cocky. Gambling has returned in *Juiced 2* and players can now put their pink slips on the line before commencing a race. If you win, your garage gets that much fuller, but if you lose get ready to kiss that 6-speed Mona Lisa goodbye. What's hella cool is while online racing is currently limited to eight players, up to 1000 people can log on, watch and gamble their game credits on the race's outcome. Viva La Vice City!

Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights is ready to burn away with your cash in exchange for the first truly next gen racing experience on the PlayStation 3. While the finished product is not quite ready to race off shelves, we've taken the preliminary test drive and have come back wanting more. ■ James Ellis

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...evolves the current street racing scene, letting players experience the culture of the real-life *HIN* tour."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ A gaudy-wheeled menace with enough pop to match its pizzazz. We're hoping it'll blast strongly past the chequered flag.

INFO BYTE

The most popular graduation present for girls in the US is now a boob job. Ergo, the girls from *HIN* must all be college graduates. Intelligence is so sexy.

WE PLAY WITH URSSULA MAYES

Her first name may sound more at home tattooed on the rump of a plump momma seal from Deutschland, but there's no doubt Miss Ursula Mayes does one thing damn well – melt underpants. She was at her jock-smouldering best when the *Juiced 2* cover girl became engorged with passion at the mere sight of our hapless OPS scribe at the recent *Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights* tit and tyre derby and accosted us for an interview.

OPS: We've heard rumours that *HIN* is heading down under. If you were to come along would you try to learn the accent?

Ursula: I think the accent is hot. I work with this bit of Aussie fluff on *Deal or No Deal* called Lisa Gleave. Her accent is sooo hot.

OPS: Do it? Er, what? Here? Look, we've heard that you dabble in videogames and you like anime. Are you actually a closet geek?

Ursula: Erm, if you guys were to see me in my daily life you probably wouldn't recognise me. I don't wear makeup, and I don't know if this is considered a geek or whatever, but I'm a homebody. I never go out. And as for videogames, I've always played them since I was little. My dad had arcade cabinets at home and I have five brothers so...

OPS: So you knew how to handle the guys from a young age?

Ursula: Erm, ah, look, that's what happens when you have a lot of brothers. They were a big influence, and we've all got weird names, too. I'm glad I'm not something like 'Lisa'.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2008
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
■ DEVELOPER: THQ
■ WEB: www.thq-games.com.au



DESTROY ALL HUMANS! POTF

Because unlimited destruction never gets old

Forget the idea of aliens coming to Earth. In *Destroy All Humans!* Path of the Furon Crypto and his bodiless menace Pox are still hanging around from their first two adventures. After wreaking havoc on mankind through the '50s and '60s they're now in the '70s, up against the usual human scum while also coming to grips with a brand new menace set to rock their alien chrome domes – dastardly vile villains from their own homeworld! Egad.

It's a good setup and one the developers are hoping to exploit to full advantage when *DAH!* lands on the all-powerful, all-consuming PlayStation 3 early next year. Looking to keep up with the rest of the poly-chewing gang, *DAH!* is set to pack all the fancy new hi-tech tricks that its peers are supporting, including all the latest next gen shaders, to realise five unique gaming environments for Crypto to tear through. While we won't see vast areas such as those in the GTA games, we can expect the action to get a lot higher this time around with newly

designed saucer missions that see Crypto take to the sky while engaging in chaotic dogfights with attack choppers – a first for the series.

Back on the ground Crypto will be able to get his growl out as he seeks the help of a seer-like Furon kung fu master who aids him in further developing his mind powers. Basically a cue for some flashy new moves, our favourite killer alien will have to traverse the path of the body, mind, space and time if he's to stand any chance of defeating his new otherworldly foe. The path of time, for instance, sees Crypto inherit a new ability called the Temporal Fist that allows him to freeze time for a short period, rearrange the environment and his enemies within it for max carnage, then start time up again and watch the mayhem. Meanwhile the path of the body will see Crypto inhabit the huge mechanical bodies of the invading aliens, allowing him to go 'Godzilla' within each area. We're not sure what the other two abilities will be, but we're hoping they're just as nutty.

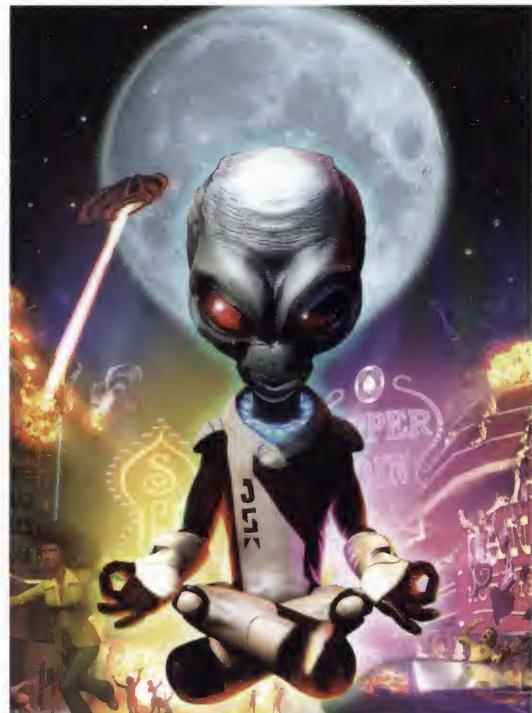
The SIXAXIS controller is also set to feature heavily in the game's controls, particularly in the saucer sections, where the dual analogue sticks will allow you to look around freely while the pad's motion-sensitivity will control your altitude and pitch. There's also the possibility that the motion-sensitivity will be integrated into Crypto's telekinetic abilities, allowing players to batter their catch around the screen with a flick of the wrist. Here's hoping... **James Ellis**

INFO BYTE

The game sees Crypto come under the tutelage of a kung fu master, similar to the evil sorcerer seen in *Big Trouble in Little China*. THQ actually got the actor, James Hong, in to try for the role, but amazingly found that an impersonator of Hong's was better than the real thing.

GUNS OF THE NON-PATRIOTS

Apart from old favourites like the Zap-o-matic and Disintegrator gun, Crypto will have a few new mind-bonkingly fab man-killers in his arsenal come *DAH!*'s release. First up there's the Venus Human-trap. Crypto fires this baby out and it grows into a monstrous man-eating plant that attacks nearby people or gobble up blighters tossed towards it. There's the Tornado-tron that sees Crypto summon and control a tornado from his saucer, but is only available when the saucer is cloaked. Finally there's the Black Hole gun, the new king of gaming gunnery. It rips open a temporary hole in the space-time continuum, sucking humans, vehicles, lamp posts – everything – into its zero gravity core.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "DAH/POTF is out to redefine the *DAH!* concept for next gen consoles by making the good stuff better"

WHAT WE SAY:

■ It's still over six months from release, but it has enough good ideas to beam the license up to higher ground.



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YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT THE SKILLS? BATTLE YOUR MATES IN THE NEW SNOWSTORM ONLINE GAME IN HABBO. TEAM UP FOR THE ULTIMATE RUMBLE ALL DAY LONG AT HABBO.COM.AU WHERE ELSE?



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: SPORTS
■ PLAYERS: 1-TBA
■ RELEASE: AUGUST 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: EA
■ DEVELOPER: EA BLACK BOX
■ WEB: www.ea.com



SKATE

Keeping it real...

Keeping it 'real': a concept usually espoused by blinged up rappers welding dual Mac 10s, surrounded by a bevy of scantily clad video bitches who all conveniently forgot to get dressed on the day of the video shoot.

Skate, in a completely different way, is also keeping it real, albeit without the troupe of semi-naked women. While the *Tony Hawk's* franchise slowly disappears up its own arse, trying to cater to a million different niche markets simultaneously (a process Activision and Neversoft are admittedly trying to halt with *Proving Ground*), EA has attempted to grab the genre by the pubic hairs, dragging skateboarding kicking and screaming back to reality.

The first port of call is the control system. Instead of allowing you to jump straight in and perform ridiculous death defying stunts from the get go, *Skate* forces you to practice techniques, with a control system that attempts to mimic the physical movements of skating itself.

The result is a more deliberate, slow build experience that should ring true to fans of the sport. Even the act of landing

a kickflip, which is usually as easy as wiping your own arse (or pushing the @ button), is a rewarding experience. This, as any greasy kid hanging outside the bottle shop will inform you, mirrors the experience of the real skater: it can take a novice months of practise before he/she can consistently land such a trick.

Most techniques utilise the second analogue stick. A swift down and up motion, for example, will result in a simple ollie; pushing down, however, before flicking off to the right will result in a kick flip. While this is slightly similar to 'Nail the Trick' in *Tony Hawk's Project 8*, it's still an evolutionary control leap that should make for a more immersive skating experience.

These 'flickit' controls

seem to form the foundation of *Skate's* mission to bring realism to skating. There's a chance these new controls may prove a little daunting to casual gamers, but we imagine most will appreciate the impressive depth.

We hope it succeeds, because no genre deserves to be monopolised. Someone had to give Activision a stiff kick in the rear, and we can only hope that *Skate* does it. With the *Tony Hawk* series on the wane since the near-perfect *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3*, *Skate* looks set to firmly pull out the rug from under it and stage a two-sided battle for skating supremacy. Who wins? You decide.

■ Mark Serrels



■ "Man, I'm as stiff as my board!"



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Skate's unique control scheme captures the true feel of skating versus the typical button mashing gameplay of past skating games."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ In the wise words of Yoda, "Control, control, you must learn control!"

SAN VANA-WHAT?

Despite the fact that *Skate* attempts to 'keep it real', the game is actually set in a fictional city – to a certain extent. The city of San Vanelona is actually a combination of three major skating cities: San Francisco, Vancouver, and Barcelona. Get it? San Vanelona? Yeah, we thought it was a bit naff too, but apparently *Skate* is set in a "fully reactive skateboarding" city, which means... well, we don't really know what it means, but needless to say, San Vanelona will be an open-ended skateboarding paradise, designed specifically for all your skating needs.



INFO BYTE

While *Skate* doesn't feature the celeb firepower of *Tony Hawk's*, there are over 19 licensed skaters featured. Few are household names, but fans of the sport will undoubtedly recognise Danny Way, who leapt over the great wall of China on a skateboard a couple of years back.



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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: RACING
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
■ DEVELOPER: CODEMASTER
■ WEB: <http://au.codemasters.com>



COLIN McRAE DIRT

His name is mud

Rally games. They truly are due for a renaissance. We need something to pick up where the surprisingly exceptional *WRC Rally Evolution* left off, and with Evolution currently sidetracked with a little number called *MotorStorm*, it's up to Codemasters and its stalwart rally series to drag the hard-nosed rally simulator kicking and screaming into the next generation.

Enter *Colin McRae DIRT*, a game that combines the visually stunning balls of misshapen metal from *MotorStorm* with the authenticity and graphical prowess of the likes of *GTHD*.

The presentation itself, perhaps one of the only things we haven't had a chance to mention before, is actually a real eyebrow raiser. There's nothing vanilla about *DIRT*'s super-slick menu navigation and overlays. The game even keeps persistent stats on all manner of borderline inane criteria, which are presented to you during load times so you've got something to read (and, possibly, be embarrassed about).

Restarts, DNFs, highest jump, clean stages, longest distance without a crash (which teetered around 900 metres until we got our act together) – they go on.

Another element of *DIRT* we dabbled in, and have been unable to fully test previously, is the five-level difficulty setting. *DIRT* poses some interesting risk-versus-reward questions in its intimidating career mode – you're awarded more cash the higher the difficulty; cash that can (and needs to) be used to purchase new vehicles from a variety of different classes. You'll breeze through on easy, but your pockets (and your garage) will be virtually empty. Pro will pose a serious challenge (particularly because *DIRT* features terminal damage – one wrong adjustment and your race will be over and they'll be scraping your co-driver out of the glovebox) but if you're successful you'll be rolling in dough.

After some extensive hands-on, we do have some minor issues, although we'll wait until the finished game arrives before we become too concerned. A few notable

rally countries, particularly Sweden and Finland, are making their absence felt and the lack of weather effects in the version we've been playing is a tad worrisome. Also, while the handling satisfies, at this point it isn't quite as loose as it ought to be, and we feel the cars don't quite slide as much as they should. Potential quibbles aside however, with racing sims on the PS3 currently limited to the exceedingly meagre content of *GTHD* and the accomplished but nonetheless sterile open-wheel shenanigans of *Formula One*, *DIRT* really ought to rule the realism roost for the foreseeable future. □ Luke Reilly

WHAT THEY SAY:

"...set to deliver an exhilarating thrill ride through a massive variety of off-road racing experience."

WHAT WE SAY:

Pretty much guaranteed to be the serious sim of choice for realism connoisseurs until further notice.



WIDE LOAD

If there's one thing you can't accuse *DIRT*'s garage of it's a lack of variety. *DIRT* will feature more than 40 different rally machines from WRC-spec regulars like the Citroën C4 and the Mitsubishi Lancer WRC to historical icons like the Toyota Celica GT-Four and the 1995 Subaru Impreza in which McRae won his first championship. The eclectic range also includes former Group B juggernauts, dune buggies, trophy trucks, Dakar-esque 4WDs and SUVs, mid-sized rallycross saloon cars, hillclimbers and even big rigs.



"Three left, opens into hairpin... right? Damn it! Who put a question mark in my pace notes?"





PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
■ PLAYERS: 1-TBA
■ RELEASE: DECEMBER 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
■ DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
■ WEB: www.ubi.com



BROTHERS IN ARMS HELL'S HIGHWAY

The road to hell...

Another month, another WWII shooter. What's the dealio? At one point we couldn't get enough of blasting round after round of hot lead carnage into the Deutsche guts of those goose-stepping Nazi bastards, but now? Fans are restless. Maybe we should give those poor Germans a break – they made a mistake and they're sorry! Can't we all just get along?

Of course not – peaceful co-existence does not a great videogame make. That's why Ubisoft is picking up its rifle, shouting "oohah", and gearing up to teach those damn dirty Nazis a lesson they'll never forget (because we'll be virtually blasting them until the end of gaming history).

To be fair though, the *Brothers in Arms* franchise was always one of the best WWII first-person shooters around and despite the 'stale as cold chips' subject matter, a quality game is a quality game. And trust us, from what we've seen so far, this chapter of *Brothers in Arms* looks set to be one of the best shooters on the market.

For starters, as you might expect, the game looks astonishing – easily challenging the similarly Unreal Engine 3-powered *Rainbow Six Vegas* for the 'fanciest graphics' crown. But like Julia Roberts said, after gazing upon Lyle Lovett's gruesome dial, looks aren't everything. Thankfully though, it's in the

gameplay department that *Hell's Highway* impresses most.

As we laid eyes on the game, the first thing we noticed was the very accurate and real destructibility of the environments. We've seen and heard plenty of developers brag about how their game is fully destructible, but this is the first time we believed it.

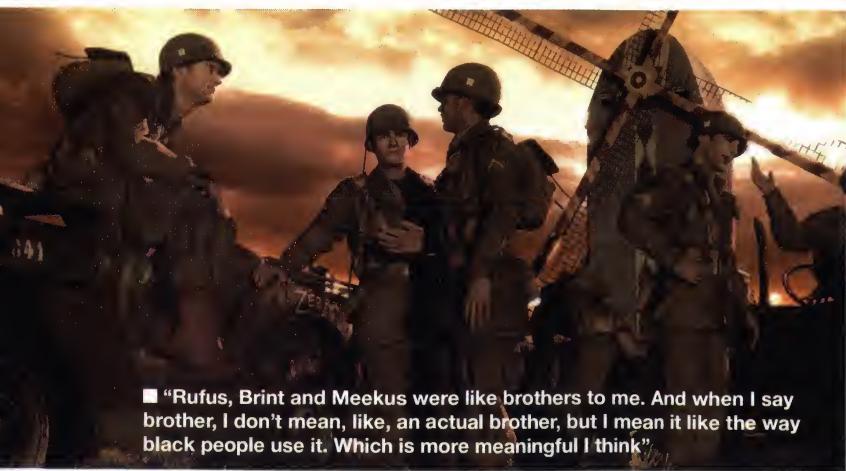
Picture the scene.

You're approaching a well defended mansion. You see Krauts poking their heads above a beautifully rendered white picket fence. They spy you approaching and immediately drop behind the sparse cover offered by the aforementioned fence. They giggle to themselves – they're safe as houses... right?

WRONG!

You pull out your Thompson, jam down the trigger and proceed to tear through the fence like a dog eating a biscuit. Your foes are brickin' it and their pants are brown. They now realise the shredded fence is about as useful as boobs on a bull, and scatter like roaches from a cereal box looking for some way to avoid your onslaught of 'bullet' death.

The AI and destruction in this scene behaved so naturally in tandem that it was impossible not to be completely immersed. We walked away in a daze, fully convinced that *Brothers in Arms Hell's Highway* will seize the WWII FPS market by force. Now that *Call of Duty* has moved into the present, victory ought to be assured. □ **Mark Serrels**



■ "Rufus, Brint and Meekus were like brothers to me. And when I say brother, I don't mean, like, an actual brother, but I mean it like the way black people use it. Which is more meaningful I think."

FAMILY TIES



Brothers in Arms is hardly the most original name out there: in fact, it's a crowded market.

Last time we checked there was a crappy Dire Straits album, which included a crappy Dire Straits song with the same moniker – but that's merely the beginning. At the last count we spotted (deep breath) a Joan Baez album, a Van Damme-less *Universal Soldier* sequel, an episode of the BBC's *Robin Hood*, a Sandra Harvey novel, and an episode of the ever 'awesome' *Highlander* TV series all called *Brothers in Arms*. Yep, that's some fine company you've got there Ubisoft...

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "...the Unreal Engine 3 powers real next generation graphics and the most intense, action-oriented recreation of true history ever offered as interactive entertainment."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Ditto.

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: SPORTS
■ PLAYERS: 1-6
■ RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
■ DEVELOPER: YUKES MEDIA CREATIONS
■ WEB: www.thq-games.com.au



WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008

"Oh my Lord... HE JUST HIT HIM WITH A CHAIR!"

Hot damn diggity! THQ recently showed off the first playable build of *WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2008* on PS3 and OPS was on the scene to throw on the spandex and get in the ring. Our first impressions: all good.

Pumped and primed with the muscle of PS3, the game's HD visuals make the spectacle that is *SVR08* look almost as brutally gaudy as the biffo fans eat up each night on the tube. The characters, which include icons such as Undertaker, Kane, John Cena, Bobby Lashley, and Sandman, all looked diamond-sharp, while their Frankenstein animations have been smoothed out to provide for a more free-flowing extravaganza. It's hot, it's visceral – Yukes sure knows how to do bulging, sweating man flesh.

Looks aside, the fun factor of *SVR08* has also been watered and sung to with a crop of vital new improvements branching out from the previous iteration. Now each superstar can access two different fight styles from the game's eight varieties,

with each offering unique benefits that will alter how you approach bouts. Including hardcore, technician, brawler, submission artist, high flier, dirty, showman and powerhouse styles, the game is aiming to allow the attitude of the player to govern the theatrics on-screen. For instance, selecting Triple H and the powerhouse style, we took it to Jeff Hardy on the mat when the upstart tried to get us with an early pin; not a good idea when up against a powerhouse, as we used Triple H throw Hardy off of us like he'd been dieting with Nicole Richie, giving us the momentum to rocket up and start a counter attack. Selecting Rey Mysterio, on the other hand, gave us access to the high-flier style and a new selection of aerial moves and abilities to help turn the tide against the other mammoth beef mountains. Thankfully this new gameplay addition seems to be more than a mere gimmick, which is always good in the substantive world of wrestling.

Perhaps even bigger news is that the

ECW franchise will be splattering its way onto the WWE scene for the first time on consoles since Mr. Money himself, Vince McMahon, bought it out. Even though the game doesn't have ECW in the title, expect it to be just as well represented as RAW and Smackdown, with all the big names and gory events. While we're not sure what crazy blood-splattering ECW modes will feature in the final game, we do know that an Extreme Rules Match will feature, no doubt packed with all manner of heinous pain ready to be dished out and discovered. **James Ellis**

INFO BYTE

Apart from the generous list of wrestlers set to ship with the game, THQ is also going to supply additional downloadable superstars over the PlayStation 3 gaming network.

USE YOUR THUMBS TO GET OUT OF A LEGLOCK

Yukes and THQ have been working hard to remedy some of the more frustrating elements that have plagued the series to date, with *SVR08* introducing the Struggle Submission System. As any wrestling fan can testify, continually getting drawn into submission moves where you end up mashing the controller to escape can lead to more hand cramps than a pile of vintage *Playboy* magazines and a lot of time to kill. Now, rather than have a sharpshooter or figure-4 leglock be automatic, attacking players will have to manage the pressure they're putting into each lock with the analogue stick while the poor blighter on the other end can try to use their stick to wiggle out of it. Smart that.



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The new Superstar Fighting Styles and Struggle Submission System are certain to bring the sports entertainment videogame experience to new heights"

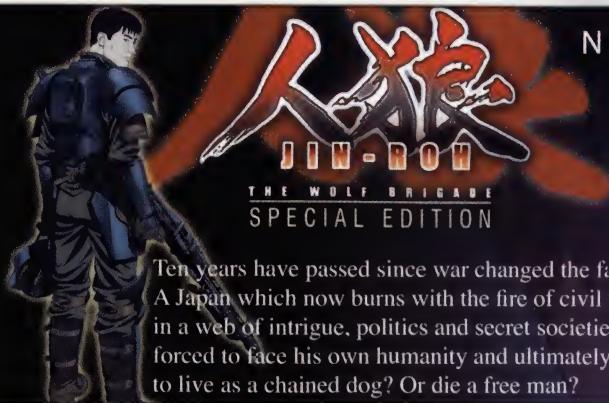
WHAT WE SAY:

■ It doesn't take a Rhodes scholar to predict this'll be a buy-or-die purchase for body slamming gurus come this November.

ANIMEBLITZ



ON **DVD** VIDEO JULY 18



NOT MEN, BUT WOLVES IN MENS' CLOTHING...



From Production I.G.
(BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE)
and the Director of
GHOST IN THE SHELL



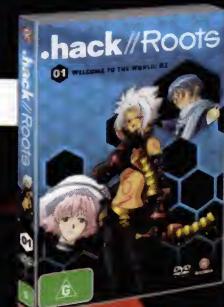
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Ten years have passed since war changed the face of Japan. A Japan which now burns with the fire of civil unrest. Embroiled in a web of intrigue, politics and secret societies, Constable Fuse is forced to face his own humanity and ultimately decide - is it better to live as a chained dog? Or die a free man?



.hack//Roots

THE WORLD IS REBORN!



The latest instalment in the .hack sage!

"The World" has been reborn as "The World R:2". Haseo, one such new player, finds himself not only the target of countless Player Killers, but also of two rival guilds each hoping to use him in pursuit of their own agendas.



MOON PHASE

Ghosts, vampires, spirits...
and cat ears?



While a photographer is investigating a mysterious castle, he unknowingly frees a young vampire girl who's been trapped there for years, unleashing the girl's peaking vampire powers, alluring beauty and uncontrollable personality upon the world.

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THE SAIYANS HAVE RETURNED... IN WIDESCREEN!

DRAGON BALL Z

This set, containing the entire Season One on 6 discs, has been digitally re-mastered in High Definition and transferred from the original Japanese film. It features revised English dialogue, the original Japanese music, and a 24-page booklet. Power up!



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PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: TACTICAL SHOOTER
 ■ PLAYERS: 1-16
 ■ RELEASE: AUGUST 2007
 ■ DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
 ■ DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PARIS
 ■ WEB: www.ubi.com



■ "Okay. They said to look directly at the blast, right?" (cooking sound)

Exit Cover ▾

HOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

GRAW inspiring...

War, what is it good for? Well if the past three months is anything to go by, a whole lot of videogames. Flicking through the last few issues of this hallowed magazine it seems that a helluva lot of page space has been spent focusing upon the art of death and murder. *EndWar*, *Call of Duty 4*, *Medal of Honor Airborne*, *Frontlines: Fuel of War*, *Rainbow Six Vegas*, *Resistance: Fall of Man*, *Blacksite: Area 51* – the list goes on and on. Whether in the present, the past, or the very near future, it seems that developers love to make games about war. Either that, or we love playing them.

We suspect it's the latter, because if a game is good it doesn't matter if it's part of the most crowded genre in history – and trust us when we say, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* is very, very good indeed. We just wish it would hurry up and come out already!

If you've played any previous *GRAW*

iterations then you already know the score regarding this sequel. Set in Mexico, in the near future, *Ghost Recon* mixes high tech gadgets and mild strategy elements with top notch shooter action and some big ass explosions. This is, however, the series debut on PS3 and, as such, every aspect of the game is razor sharp.

The graphics, which have always been spectacular, are now smoother than even the smoothest baby's bottom, cranked up to the max with some awesome new particle and motion blur effects. The improvement isn't noticeably different from the original *GRAW*, released in 2006, but the more attention you pay to different visual aspects, the greater disparity you'll see between the two. There is an improvement, but you just may have to squint a little to see it.

The slow, deliberate pace of the series has remained, as has the trademark 'over the shoulder' cam view, and while this

may disappoint those who prefer the run and gun style of more traditional shooters, fans of the series will no doubt be relieved that the franchise is sticking to its roots.

SIXAXIS motion-sensing is also utilised, but at the moment its implementation is completely hit and miss. Tilting the controller left or right 'apparently' causes Captain Scott Mitchell to roll left or right, but we found the whole thing to be completely unresponsive. In the heat of a frenzied gun fight we suspect the random nature of this function will render it completely useless. At best this is a last minute tack-on that badly needs fixing.

That being said, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter* still retains the quality that the series has represented thought the history of the franchise. We have no doubt that the finished product will retain the high standards of its predecessors. ▀ **Mark Serrels**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "With Tom Clancy's *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2*, Ubisoft is taking all the successful elements in the original to an unparalleled level of quality."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Bring this game out before we spontaneously combust.

GRAW JUNIOR

Miraculously, Ubisoft has also managed to shrink the *GRAW* franchise down to pocket size with *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* for the PSP. While the game still struggles with the control issues you would expect, due to the absence of a second analogue 'nub', the slow strategic pace of the *GRAW* experience helps reduce the usual frustrations that come with PSP shooters. Graphically the game is a beast, pushing the PSP hardware to the hilt, and looks to be well worth checking out upon its release towards the end of August.



■ "Looks like Mack is showing the new recruits his Black Hawk Down trick again... What a kidder." Ka-Boom!



INFO BYTE

The PS3 version of *GRAW 2* benefits from new co-op multiplayer modes and additional multiplayer maps.



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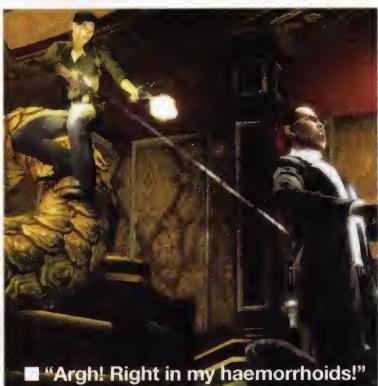


PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

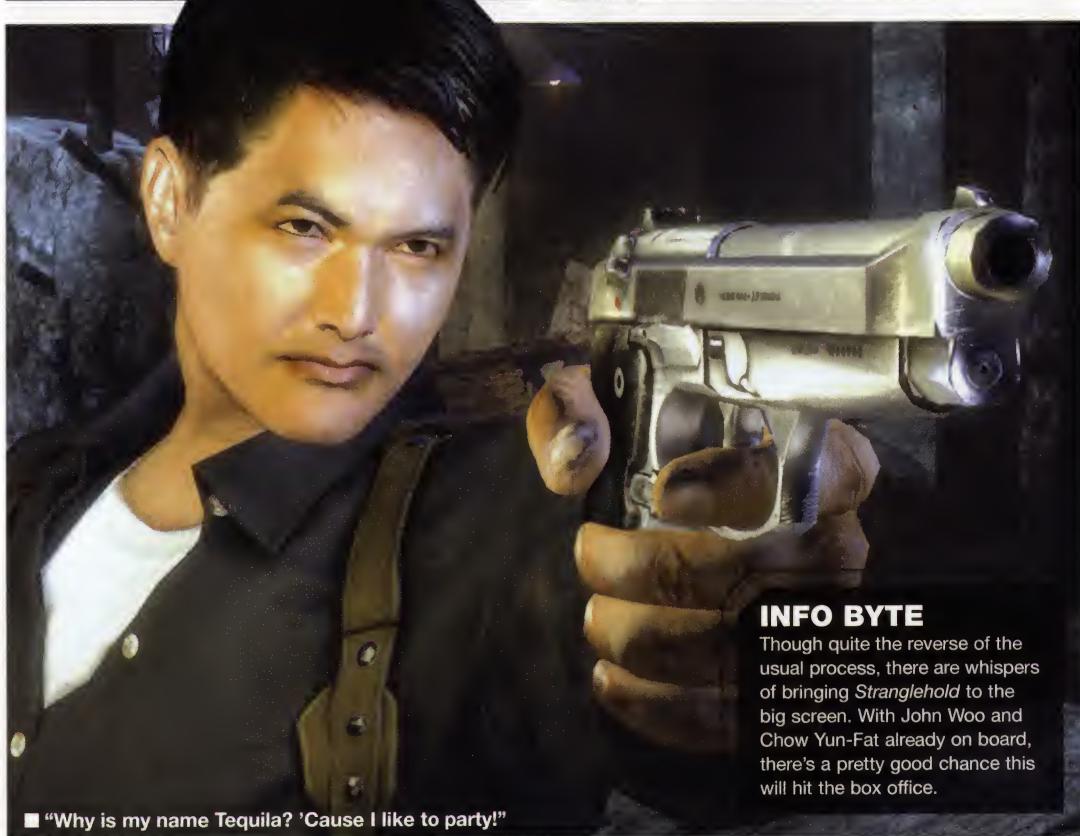
■ GENRE: ACTION
■ PLAYERS: 1-TBC
■ RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT
■ DEVELOPER: MIDWAY CHICAGO
■ WEB: www.midway.com



■ "I bet you're thinking, 'Did he fire 388 bullets or was it only 387?'"



■ "Argh! Right in my haemorrhoids!"



STRANGLEHOLD

This Tequila will put you on the floor permanently

Stanglehold puts you in the shoes of Inspector 'Tequila' Yuen, a tough cop on the edge whose battle with organised crime in Hong Kong leads the local Triads to ally with the Russian mafia. Soon, Tequila finds himself deep in an intense, personal conflict with the criminal underworld, as the Russian mob kidnaps his ex-wife and holds her captive in the windy city of Chicago. Cue Tequila's globe-trotting, high-calibre vendetta and deafening roars of gunfire.

Harnessing the talents of Honk Kong action legends Chow Yun-Fat and John Woo, *Stranglehold* is a bullet-ballet with all the trimmings. As you'd expect in one of Woo's projects, slow-mo plays a big part, and you can engage 'Tequila Time' to get the drop on the mobsters. While other shooters have used slow-motion in the past, *Stranglehold* takes the concept much further and adds much greater depth to gameplay with a more impressive, cinematic style.

Midway has assembled highly interactive environments that seamlessly add new dynamics to combat, allowing

you to leap off walls, run along banisters, slide along tables and even swing from chandeliers while doling out dual-fisted justice. In the Chicago Museum level Tequila can use the massive dinosaur skeleton exhibits as a ramp to make a mad dash to the balcony above or swing from the pterodactyl displays suspended from the ceiling to outmanoeuvre and outflank enemies.

As the body count rises, Inspector Yuen can unleash 'Tequila Bombs' – feats of Woo-style explosive gunplay. These include pinpoint Precision Aim that provides one-shot kills, the 'Hollywood clip'-inspired Barrage that gives you rapid-fire and unlimited ammo for a limited time and the Spin Attack that lets loose 360-degree lead carnage, complete with Woo's trademark flock of white doves.

Using numerous next gen tech including the Massive D physics engine, *Stranglehold* offers fully destructible environments that leave persistent debris. Streaks of gunfire literally tear shreds off walls, rip through furniture and shatter objects. As you'll often be

facing off against numerous enemies, the highly destructible environments mean that any cover is temporary; this further encourages players to approach the game in a dynamic, strategic fashion.

Another cinematic element to be included in the game are Mexican Standoffs, to capture those tense situations where both the hero and the bad guy have each other at point blank range, and a moment's hesitation is the difference between life and death.

Doubtlessly one of the most exciting upcoming releases for the PS3, we'll keep a bead trained on *Stranglehold* until its release later in the year. **• Nick O'Shea**

WHAT THEY SAY:

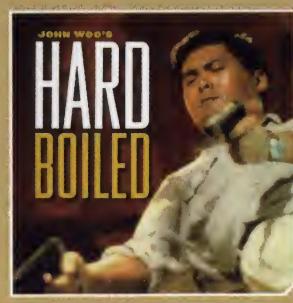
■ "Dual-wielding, stunt-laden gunplay combined with massive destructible environments ensures that *Stranglehold* will be a true tour-de-force."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ We like the way Midway thinks. We can't wait to squeeze off a few thousand rounds.

DOUBLE SHOT OF TEQUILA

Information regarding the Collector's Edition of *Stranglehold* has recently come to light, and it'll definitely see plenty more pre-orders slapped down for the deluxe version. To fill in the backstory of Inspector Tequila Yuen, the Collector's Edition will include the genre-defining action classic *Hard Boiled* on the same Blu-ray disc, completely remastered in high definition with full Chinese/English language options and subtitles. A far better addition than the usual art books and 'behind-the-scenes' documentaries.





■ "Damn it! I forgot to load the guns before jumping again"

CHOKE ON THIS!

Be the first to play *Stranglehold* and win priceless John Woo gear

Thanks to Red Ant, Official PlayStation Magazine is proud to present a once in a lifetime opportunity for all John Woo and videogames fans. John Woo's *Stranglehold* is due to unload its ultra-stylish hard action on PS3 in two short months, but we've cooked up something special in the meantime.

Two very lucky winners and one of their friends will be flown into Sydney and put up in a high rolling five star hotel, before being taken out for a traditional Chinese banquet, where you better believe you'll be engaging your 'Tequila Time' skills.

The next day the winners will be driven to a secret location where they will be the first people in Australia to play the highly anticipated *Stranglehold*. As well as enjoying the game before anyone else, the winners and their friends will compete in an intense Chow Yun-Fat-style shootout where the aim is to cause as much collateral damage as possible. We'll be taking before and after photos of the carnage to help pick the ultimate champ. The winner of the shootout will have their handywork printed in the magazine and score an amazing bundle of limited edition John Woo merchandise. This is the first time we've ever been able to offer such an amazing gaming opportunity, so make sure you lock and load your entry, pronto.

ENTER AND WIN!

For your chance to win this awesome experience all you need to do is answer this simple question, send your entry to us under the headline 'Stranglehold Giveaway' and follow the instructions below.

Question: What was the name of the John Woo movie that *Stranglehold* continues on from?

- A Hard Cooked
- B Hard Boiled
- C Hard Pants

HOW TO ENTER

Send entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition in the subject line, or post them to OPS Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355 with the name of the competition CLEARLY MARKED on the envelope. Include the name of the competition, your name, age, email address, contact number, and more importantly, your full address and postcode! All competitions close on July 31. Winners need to be ready to travel at times specified by the promoter.

■ "Dinner is... er... served? I really suck at one-liners!"



JOHN WOO PRESENTS
STRANGLEHOLD

TIGER HILL ENTERTAINMENT MIDWAY

WIN!

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ONLINE TACTICAL SHOOTER
■ PLAYERS: 1-32
■ RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
■ DEVELOPER: SLANT SIX
■ WEB: www.us.playstation.com/PS3/



■ This screen is so improved over PS2 it's like night and day



■ "Yep, I really should have picked the khaki camouflage for this mission"

SOCOM: CONFRONTATION

They'll come by land, by sea and, now, on PS3

Sony's online-friendly tactical shooter SOCOM has been the quiet achiever on PS2 for ages now. What it lacked in visual style it made up for in an above-average single player mode and a fairly rocking online, multiplayer component.

Now we're going next gen, so we thought we'd check out if the transition is a smooth one. First up, we're finally getting a SOCOM that looks good. For many players that was what stuck in their craw about the series: bland, flat graphics. As you might expect – the PS3 has added levels of graphical depth, colour and cool animation much needed in this series. It's not as pretty as Rainbow Six Vegas, but it's certainly several rungs up the ladder from its PS2 buddies.

SOCOM is going to be a downloadable game, as well as being released in shops. Not having to leave your house to buy games is one of the coolest features of the PS3 – although

we'll all start getting fat if we don't stagger out occasionally.

A bit of a shock to us was the fact there's no single-player game. It's online only (similar to Warhawk) with up to 32 people being able to play at once.

We've got to say we find that a tad shonky. Certainly online play should be encouraged – hell, we're organising Resistance tournaments as your read this – but no single-player at all?

Surely a better route would have been to make an improved single-player experience rather than ignore the caper altogether. Still, online play is always where SOCOM has excelled – so we guess Sony is hoping to play to the title's main strength.

About how the game will play Sony is being very tight-lipped. We did manage to beat one employee with a rubber hose [no, we didn't! – Ed] until he coughed up some info. And a tooth. The info included such tasty tidbits as you won't

play as just US Navy SEALs, you'll be able to pimp your squad (physically and aesthetically) and apparently Sony is going to organise online tournaments, events, team games, and feature various special modes'.

Promises of online content both free and for sale were made, and judging from the demo, the troops will be spending some time in the Middle East making things explode.

Other than that, to be honest, this game's a bit of a mystery. On one hand you have the disappointment of no single-player. On the other you have the cool factor of some major online destruction.

We're not wildly excited about this yet – it's early days – but, call us cautiously optimistic. We're not sure this is going to be the tactical shooter to own, but it certainly looks to dominate the multiplayer arena for some time. Keep reading for updates. Now where did we leave that rubber hose? ■ Anthony O'Connor



WELL, HELLO SOLDIER!

The graphics, as you can plainly see, are much improved. They looked a little washed out in some of the scenes, but compared to the PS2 version this is a major leap forward. The question will be – is it worth sacrificing single-player for a sweet looking title? The answer should come around November. We're hoping it's "yes".



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "The goal is to create the ultimate SOCOM online experience. Customise your clans, get into teams and have confrontation matches with up to 32 people."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ The online looks great. The graphics are improved and the explosions are a lot prettier. But come on guys, throw us a single-player bone here!



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RATCHET & CLANK
SIZE MATTERS



PG

Mild
violence

Ratchet and Clank are back in their biggest, smallest adventure yet – shrunk down to microscopic size and tooled up with a devastating array of weaponry.

playstation.com.au

THERE IS NOTHING SMALL ABOUT THIS GAME

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ROCK GOD SIMULATOR
 ■ PLAYERS: 1-2
 ■ RELEASE: JULY
 ■ DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
 ■ DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
 ■ WEB: www.guitarherogame.com



GUITAR HERO ENCORE: ROCKS THE 80s

"So if you ask me why I like the way I play it..."

The '80s – the decade fashion forgot. Hypercolour T-shirts. Tracksuit pants with elastic ties. Leg warmers. Designer stubble. Sequined gloves (only ever worn one at a time). They were all bad things. So bad, in fact, they detract from what the rest of the decade had to offer. *Back to the Future*. The Lamborghini Countach. *Die Hard*. Chuck Norris. *Commando*. And the music. Oh yes, the music.

Some people express a desire to forget the '80s. These people suck. You can't write off ten years just because you sported a trashy perm and shoulder pads the whole time.

Activision agrees, which is why it is releasing *Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s* – a celebration of the era and the memorable tunes it had to offer. Developed by *Guitar Hero* creators Harmonix (currently also developing *Rock Band* for MTV and EA) *Rocks the 80s* is a tribute to the hair metal, power ballads and cock rock that formed the soundtrack

to many a gen-Xer's childhood.

The game itself really isn't a fully-fledged sequel at all – it's a re-tooling of *Guitar Hero II*. The same characters return, albeit dressed in gaudy retro clobber. The same venues are available, with a token smattering of fluorescent window dressing. There aren't any new modes by the look of it either – *Guitar Hero III* will be the torchbearer for those we imagine. It's just the same game with 30 new songs.

But, of course, this is no bad thing.

The track list certainly has its moments, but there are a few notable omissions – some of the gnarliest acts the '80s had to offer are, admittedly, missing in action. It's a solid roster, no doubt, but casual music fanciers and anyone under 18 (and we're generalising here) probably won't recognise a lot of it. That's not to say they won't enjoy it – but it may prove, at least initially, to be a slight turn-off.

It wouldn't surprise us in the slightest, however, if Activision is holding some big

guns in reserve for *Guitar Hero III* rather than blowing its proverbial wad on *Rocks the 80s*. In fact, we'd be downright shocked if it wasn't the case.

At any rate, a new *Guitar Hero* game is still a new *Guitar Hero* game, so it's very existence had us stuffing foil-wrapped cucumbers down our pants, strutting around the office and testing the impact of our new pants bulges on potential groupies (read, female colleagues, read, inappropriate).

So does this game signal a new wave of less eclectic, themed *Guitar Hero* titles? A range not unlike *SingStar '80s*, *SingStar Rocks!* and (the accidentally unveiled) *SingStar '90s*? We certainly wouldn't mind if it did.

We're far more excited about *Guitar Hero III* and *Rock Band*, but *Rocks the 80s* will no doubt prove to be the perfect stopgap – a hard-rocking entree to sate our axe-wielding appetites until Christmas. □ Luke Reilly

"YOU FRAMED AN ASIA POSTER?"

Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s will feature a smattering of '80s staples. Asia's 'Heat of the Moment' is a little sketchy, but most of the others are top notch. In our afternoon with this sucker we blasted through '18 and Life' from Skid Row, 'Nothing But A Good Time' from Poison, 'Synchronicity II' from The Police, 'Lonely is the Night' from Billy Squier and many more (including a few great tracks we can't talk about yet). Our fave was 'Play With Me' by Extreme (it's from the mall chase scene in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*) which is an eyeball-melting metal finger-bender infused with classical licks.



■ Leopard skin guitar. Matches her thong. And his thong... (ewww...)

INFO BYTE

Unlike *Guitar Hero III*, which is set to feature around 50% master tracks, *Rocks the 80s* is again mostly (very decent) covers, except for 'I Wanna Rock' by Twisted Sister and 'I Ran' by A Flock of Seagulls.

WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s brings back an era where neon was radical and you couldn't find spandex that was tight enough."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ Smell that? This is the scent of rock.



ARMORED CORE 4



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FROMSOFTWARE

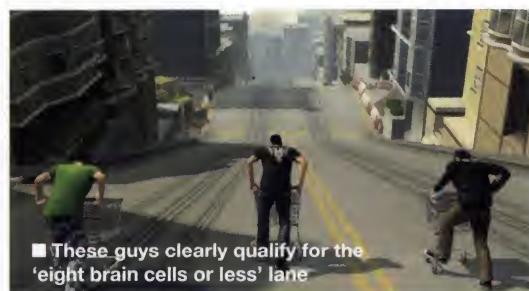
505 GAMES

PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: PARTY
■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ RELEASE: LATE 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
■ DEVELOPER: SIDHE INTERACTIVE
■ WEB: www.jackasthegame.com



■ Trying to bullseye another guy with your weapon – just as fruity as it sounds



■ These guys clearly qualify for the 'eight brain cells or less' lane

JACKASS

Anyone seen my toy car?

"Hey... I'm Johnny Knoxville, welcome to Jackass." If this statement, followed by a southern twang of a guitar gets your heart pounding, then do we have a treat for you. Those insane, degenerate champions of broken bones and indecency, affectionately known as Johnny, Steve-O, Preston, Wee-man, Dunn and, of course, Pontius (aka Party Boy) are all coming to your neck of the woods, stirring up more trouble and mischief than Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton and two randy football teams on a week-long bender.

After nearly a year without a blip on the radar since it was initially announced, the lads of mirth, idiocy and insanity have stepped up to the plate offering their personalised brand of ludicrous

situations for you to play out, whether rolling through a stunt course in a garbage can, taking your buddy on a brief and excruciatingly painful shopping cart ride or just simply playing a variation of 'Whack-a-Mole' where you substitute 'Mole' with 'Wee-man' and try to pound his face with a mallet. There'll be around 40 minigames on offer, plus a Director Mode that allows you to edit and save your replays.

Sounding all just a little bit nuts? You bet your ass it is! Think of a bunch of mini games inspired by the antics of the crew and you've got a recipe for disaster... but this kind of a disaster, is a good thing. We're hoping for a Party Boy themed *Dance Dance Revolution* section, with interactive mat and bonus thong. Or not. **• Dave Kozicki**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Expect detailed rag doll modelling, dynamic physics and stunts that are never the same..."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ It's looking like a hell of a lot more fun than we initially thought. Guess it's time to don a bear suit and cause mayhem.



PS3 PS2 PSP PREVIEW

■ GENRE: ACTION RPG
■ PLAYERS: 1-4
■ RELEASE: JULY 2007
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
■ DEVELOPER: TOTALLY GAMES
■ WEB: www.sega.com



■ "You know what I said about killing you last? I liiiiiiiied!" (splattering sound)



■ "Ha ha! Suffer really bright, flashing rings! Bet that stings your eyes doesn't it!"

ALIEN SYNDROME

"This is for not calling us after the abduction, you Martian bastards!"

Sega is shaking the dust off one of its classic titles which hasn't been seen for a couple of decades, with its planned *Alien Syndrome* update for PSP.

After being sent to monitor the terraforming operation on Seti-Alpha 5, all contact has been lost with the spaceship Kronos. As a rescue team establishes a high orbit above Seti-Alpha 5, they discover the Kronos disabled and drifting through space, with a strange substance growing all over its hull. To assess the situation and search for survivors, veteran combatant Lieutenant Aileen Harding is sent aboard the Kronos. She soon finds that the derelict craft is crawling with huge numbers of hostile alien life-forms.

Rich with RPG elements,

your character's skill-set is highly customisable, and you can specialise in a range of weapons to fend off the alien attackers, including lasers, grenade launchers, flame throwers and even melee weaponry. Along the way you'll be assisted by a very handy support droid that not only provides fire support but can also manufacture munitions and equipment on the go.

To round out the package, you can even choose to face the alien menace with a full squad through wireless multiplayer supports for four players.

Serving up 15 levels of intense dungeon-crawling mayhem, *Alien Syndrome* is shaping up to be a compelling purchase, especially if you have some friends who are up for some multiplayer action. **• Nick O'Shea**



WHAT THEY SAY:

■ "Completely re-designed from the ground up for PSP, this new *Alien Syndrome* offers a refreshing blastathon on a venerable classic."

WHAT WE SAY:

■ It's great to see classic titles resurrected with such flair.





PSN1003/OPSM

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To celebrate the DVD release of Eddie Murphy's colossal comedy *Norbit* we're giving you the chance to win a **HUGE LCD TV** and **Home Entertainment System**, courtesy of Paramount!

Shy, mild-mannered Norbit (Eddie Murphy) is trapped in an engagement to the hulking Rasputia (also played by Murphy) when he reunites with his childhood soulmate and the woman of his dreams, Kate (Thandi Newton). Will Norbit find a way to be with Kate and stop her marrying the wrong guy,

and will he ever be able to escape the evil clutches of Rasputia?

For a chance to find out, simply enter this competition. The major prize winner will receive a truly massive prize containing a 37-inch Sharp Aquos HDTV, a Sharp Aquos Rack Speaker System and a copy

of *Norbit* on DVD. We've also got 10 runner-up prize packs containing a copy of *Norbit* and the brand new special editions of two classic Eddie Murphy flicks, *Coming to America* and *Trading Places*.

For a shot at winning big all you need to do is answer the following question.

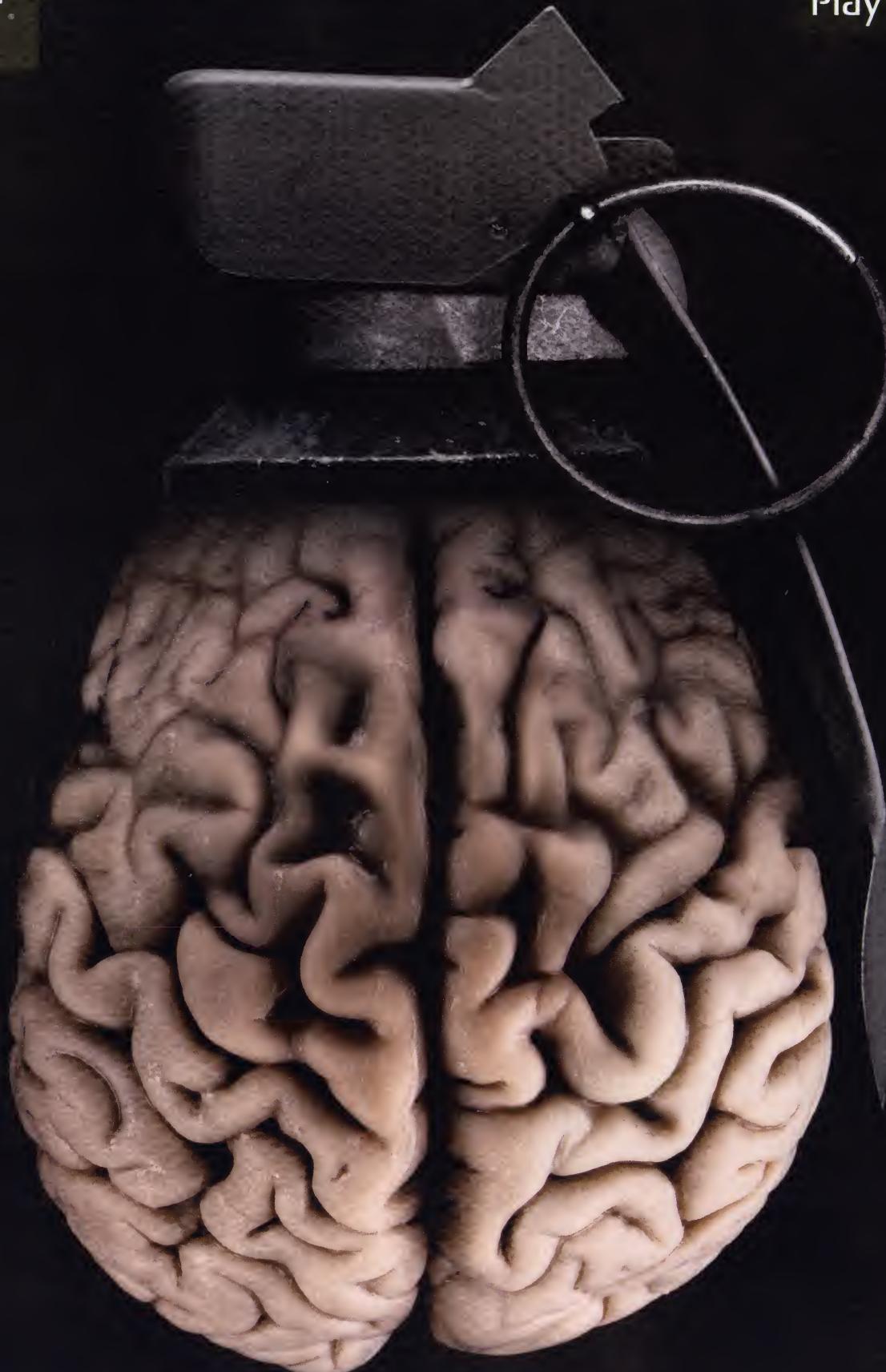
Mark your calendar for the *Norbit Giveaway* and see page 15 for entry instructions.

Question: Have you ever made a **HUGE** mistake? Tell us what it was – the bigger the better! The biggest, most embarrassing tale wins!



PlayStation Portable

PlayStation®2



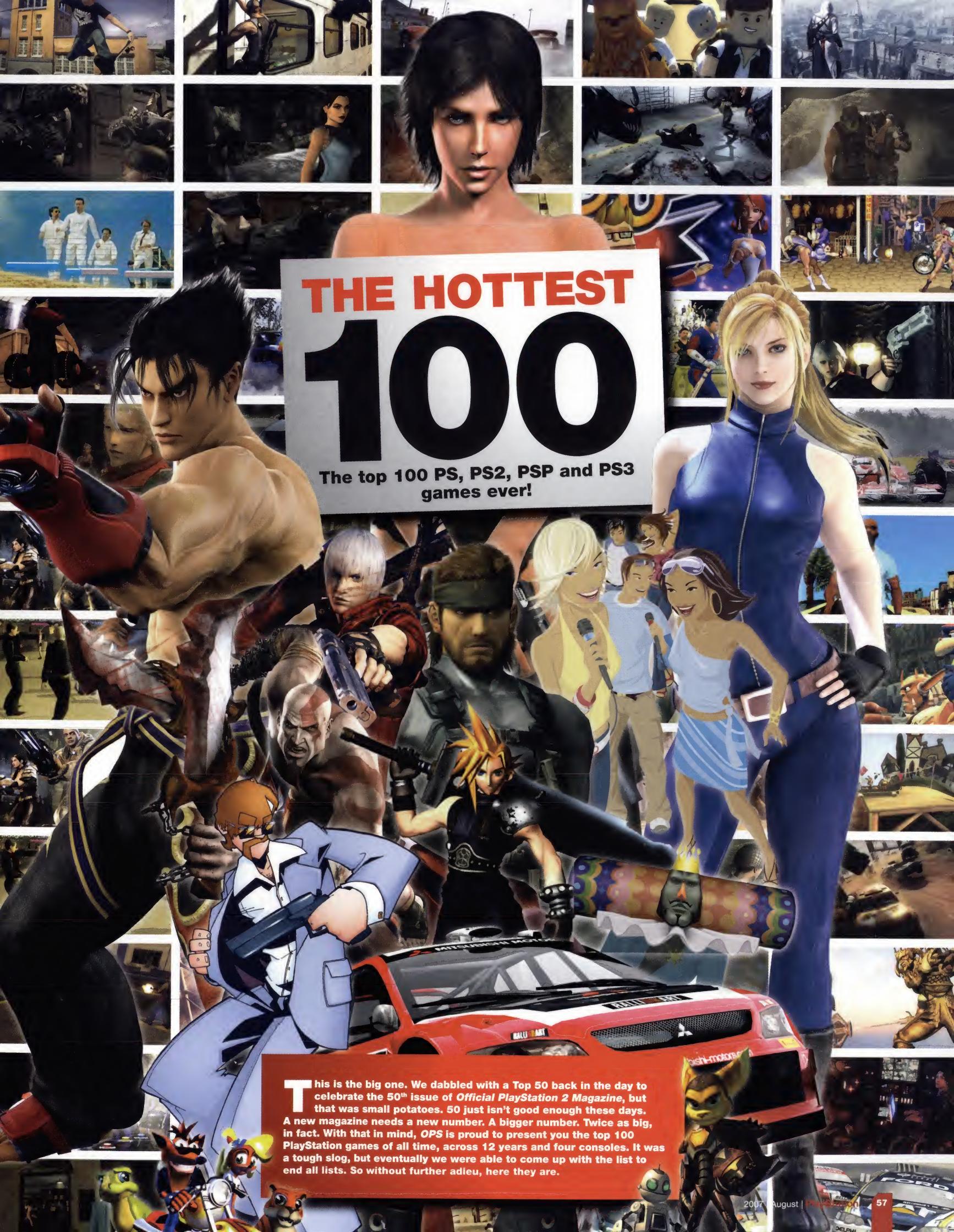
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Without the wits of a SEAL, guns and grenades are useless lumps of metal. In battle, surrounded by hostiles, with tracers zipping overhead, there's only one thing that will get your team and all innocents out alive. Your decisions.

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THE HOTTEST 100

The top 100 PS, PS2, PSP and PS3 games ever!

This is the big one. We dabbled with a Top 50 back in the day to celebrate the 50th issue of *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, but that was small potatoes. 50 just isn't good enough these days. A new magazine needs a new number. A bigger number. Twice as big, in fact. With that in mind, OPS is proud to present you the top 100 PlayStation games of all time, across 12 years and four consoles. It was a tough slog, but eventually we were able to come up with the list to end all lists. So without further adieu, here they are.

100

Urban Chaos: Riot Response

PS2 2006



An innovative and unique first-person shooter that came from nowhere – a real guilty pleasure. Fantastic visual effects, gruesome slo-mo cinematic killshots – all surprisingly awesome.

99

Shane Warne Cricket '99

PS 1998

THE cricket game for ages. Too much kinky hotel sex saw the king of spin replaced with Ricky Ponting seven years later.

97

Rez

PS2 2002

An innovative, 'musicey' game allowing gamers get into 'da groove' whilst blasting baddies. This guy later made *Lumines*.

98

Monster Hunter Freedom

PSP 2004

Hunt monsters. Kill monsters. Much like schoolgirl panties and tentacle porn, *Monster Hunter* is huge in Japan.

95

Smuggler's Run

PS2 2000



The thrill of driving through kilometres of load-free wilderness and a top-notch multiplayer mode made it an instant classic.

94

Red Faction

PS2 2001



A rock-solid, sci-fi shooter on Mars. Its use of destructible environments, or 'GeoMod' technology, was way ahead of its time.

93

Tony Hawk's Skateboarding

PS 1999



The original *Tony Hawk* got it right. Robust, addictive and featuring a credible punk soundtrack, the game was an instant hit.

92

Silent Hill 2

PS2 2001



While it failed to deliver the same impact as the creepy-as-hell original, *Silent Hill 2* is the most refined chapter in the series.

91

Colin McRae Rally

PS 1998



Fans of realistic rally sims owe a lot to this. It kickstarted the whole genre. Remarkably well crafted and addictive.

90

SSX

PS2 2000



The PS2's star launch title – its slick track design and innovative stunt system have often been copied but rarely beaten.

89

Grand Theft Auto

PS 1997



At the time, nothing more than a comically violent, low-tech, top-down crime saga. Cult fav to videogame mega-hit. Who knew?

88

ESPN NFL 2K5

PS2 2004



Critically and commercially more successful than *Madden 2005*, EA killed 2K's series with exclusive deals with the NFL and ESPN.

87

The Thing

PS2 2002



A tense pants-filler with some big ideas and a cool trust/fear element. Underrated and crying out for a next gen remake.

86

Crash Team Racing

PS 1999



Praised by critics and fans alike, *Crash Team Racing* is easily equal, and in many aspects superior, to Nintendo's *Mario Kart*.

85

Red Dead Revolver

PS2 2004



Activision's game may have out-GUNned it, but *Red Dead Revolver* single-handedly made westerns cool again.

84

Medal of Honor

PS 1999



The WWII shooter made its console debut with this game. Biggest hit of the WWII era since *Wolfenstein 3D*.

83

Lumines

PSP 2005



Lumines is the most addictive brick puzzler since *Tetris*. *Lumines* is like digital crack – it's tough to stop once you're hooked.

82

SingStar Rocks!

PS2 2006



Definitely one of the best *SingStar* titles thanks to local rock staples from INXS, Powderfinger, Grinspoon and Men at Work.

81

NHL 2002

PS2 2001



It's been surpassed technically, but it's more fun than any hockey game since. The quirky and slapstick commentary is a highlight.

79

Driver

PS 1999



The definition of cool. An immensely playable, *Bullitt*-inspired '70s chase 'em up. *GTA III* did it better, but *Driver* did it first.

78

Final Fantasy X

PS2 2002



The first PS2 *Final Fantasy* game, featuring one of the most memorable storylines in the franchise – and that twist...

77

GTA: Liberty City Stories

PSP 2005



Cramming *GTA III*'s huge Liberty City onto the PSP and improving on its gameplay was one hell of an achievement.

76

Max Payne

PS2 2001



Dark, gritty, hilarious; *Max Payne*'s bullet time function has been oft imitated, never bettered. Where's *Max Payne 3*, huh?



You can't help but smell what's cookin'... best wrestling game in the business. Yukes took OUT the sexy diva matches in 2007.



The best platformer on PlayStation – still far superior to any *Crash* game on PS2. Proof that few do it as well as Naughty Dog.



Frontline's recreation of the Omaha beach landing still stands as the greatest WWII moment in PlayStation history.



The best rally sim doing the rounds right now. Deformable environments, random roadside events – very slick.



It'll never hit a Top 100 anywhere else but Australia, but it's great fun. Plus, there's no dive button for Steve Price to use in Origin.



An immersive, intriguing adventure that was ignored by pretty much everyone and has become somewhat of a cult favourite.



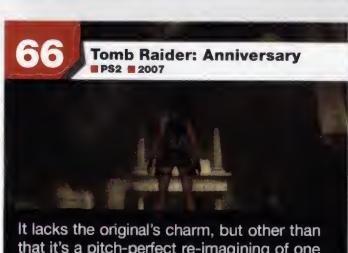
A rewarding and super-tight sports game, and with three mates it's game, set and match. Doubles is almost too much fun!



A super-destructive racing game that saw the series hit the big league. Awesome track design, admirable attention to detail.



Despite the cheesy storyline it's the most enjoyable GTA rip-off yet thanks to its fantastic shooting and hand-to-hand combat.



It lacks the original's charm, but other than that it's a pitch-perfect re-imagining of one of the greatest adventures ever coded.



Combining *Simpsons* one-liners with videogame satire and the chance to explore a 3D Springfield proved an unlikely hit.



Roll around. Pick stuff up. Become bigger. Kooky but soooo addictive. Sticky balls – they're not always bad.



The most successful game on the PlayStation, GT was a purist's wet dream. A true sim in a pool of *Ridge Racer* wannabes.



Snake grows beard. Sneaks around. Recruits soldiers. Sneaks around some more. It IS a Snake in your pocket.



A great beat 'em up that shows respect for its film inspiration. Violent, gritty, cool – one of the best movie conversions ever.



Nothing on the PlayStation 2 has better level design. A criminally underplayed classic. Play it (we know you didn't).



When *Syphon Filter* left the PlayStation it got shit. *The Omega Strain* was rubbish. *Dark Mirror* saw the series back on track.



Like the *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* classics, this offers a ball-busting challenge. Perfect for those who don't crave it cute 'n' cuddly.



Vegas baby, Vegas! Ignore the slots and shoot some scumbags. An accessible yet deep tactical shooter – looks bloody unreal.



A major success upon release, nearly 10 years on it's still regarded as one of the best brawlers, and indeed best games, ever.



When it comes to Australian sports, RPIC 2007 is the business. The AI can be dopey but against your mates it's a bloody beauty.



One of Rockstar's tamer titles. A fantastic script and good variety ensure it's just as fun, if not as ambitious, as the *GTA* games.



51 *Hitman: Blood Money*
■ PS2 ■ 2006

Although lacking *Hitman* 2's iconic missions, *Blood Money* made many subtle improvements over the legendary assassination sim. Dark and disturbed – just the way we like it.



A rollicking action-adventure with cool weapons and a superbly crafted plot. This, and the similar sequel, are STILL top notch.



A cel-shaded shooter with comic book-style on-screen sound effects is a wacky concept, but somehow it works – really well.

Future Proof

25

games that would have had a better-than-average chance of making the Top 100 had we waited a little longer to compile it. Or if we had a time machine. Well, maybe next time...



- Rock Band
- Haze
- Grand Theft Auto IV
- Assassin's Creed
- Guitar Hero III
- Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
- Burnout Paradise



- Metal Gear Solid 4
- SingStar
- Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
- Mercenaries 2: World in Flames
- Heavenly Sword
- LittleBigPlanet



- Brothers In Arms Hell's Highway
- LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga
- Beautiful Katamari
- Battlefield: Bad Company
- Need for Speed ProStreet
- Frontlines: Fuel of War
- Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction



- Medal of Honor Airborne
- Gran Turismo 5
- Colin McRae: DIRT
- Devil May Cry 4
- Final Fantasy XIII

44

SingStar Legends

PS2 2006



Unlike the ironically named *Anthem* (spew), *Legends* actually featured some artists worthy of its moniker. Presley, Sabbath, Cash, Franklin, Lennon, Madonna, Marvin Gaye, Dusty Springfield, Nirvana, Elton John and Aussie legends like Barnesie, Farnsie, the 'chair and the Oils. This is the best *SingStar* bar none.

BEST BIT: Johnny Cash. Ring of Fire. Nuff said.

50

Virtua Fighter 5

PS3 2007



While those used to the instant thrills of the *Dead or Alive* series may baulk at the level of patience *Virtua Fighter* requires, hardcore fans of the genre worship at the feet of this legendary franchise. *Virtua Fighter 5* features the deepest combat system ever conceived.

FAMOUS FOR: Being the standard bearer for the skilful 3D fighter, no doubt.

48

Need for Speed Underground

PS2 2003



After a string of fairly derivative PS and PS2 iterations, *Underground* dragged the series back to the front of the racing pack. *Underground*'s dangerous city-based street racing and import car tuning scene started a craze that's only now losing momentum.

BEST BIT: Seeing the street blur past during insane 200kmph drag races.

46

Guitar Hero

PS2 2006



It took its sweet time making its way across the Pacific, but it was worth the wait. *Guitar Hero* tapped into the very essence of what makes games like *SingStar* fun and then proceeded to stomp all over it with its rock boots of awesome. The perfect way to rock 'n' roll all night (and party every day).

FAMOUS FOR: The totally rad miniature Gibson SG controller it shipped with.

43

Fight Night Round 3

PS3 2007



Fight Night's staggeringly realistic visuals will rock you with more force than one of the game's devastating haymakers. Intuitive controls and arguably the best PS3 graphics yet make for an amazing bout of biffo.

BEST BIT: Watching the agony explode across your opponent's face in slow motion as your uppercut shatters his jaw.

49

Wipeout 2097

PS 1996



The follow-up to the futuristic racing game that made the PlayStation the console to own, *Wipeout 2097* combined cutting-edge cool and speed that would make your eyes bleed for a game that was an instant classic amongst fans and critics alike.

FAMOUS FOR: Its kick-ass soundtrack. Can you listen to The Prodigy's 'Firestarter' without thinking of *Wipeout*?

47

LocoRoco

PSP 2006



Playing *LocoRoco* with an enormous goofy grin on your face is not only mandatory, it's inescapable. You'll be humming those crazy tunes for weeks. Forget Prozac, this accessible, fun, cute-fest is a sure fire cure for the blues. The happiest game ever.

FACT: The language spoken by the LocoRoco is actually fictional, invented by the game's designer.

45

Resident Evil

PS 1996



The granddaddy of survival horror has had a huge effect on gaming. It used clever tricks like confined camera angles and hiding loading during door animations to deliver a level of suspense that was years ahead of its time. The sequels weren't too shabby either...

FACT: Of the six mainstream chapters, *Resident Evil 0* was the only one not to appear on a PlayStation console.

42

GUN

PS2 2005



While it owes more than a little to *GTA*, this cowboy sim is a triumph of sandbox gaming. Tackle missions, mine gold, play poker, hunt wild animals, track down bounties or be a courier in the pony express – all these and more were available across a stunning western vista.

BEST BIT: Using your hunting knife to scalp fallen enemies – that's just nasty.

41**King Kong**

■ PS2 ■ 2005



Ubisoft and Peter Jackson worked closely together to create the greatest movie licensed game ever. A stylish HUD-free interface, bowel-loosening encounters with T-Rexes and the chance to play as King Kong himself made for an instant classic.

FACT: If it wasn't for Peter Jackson's suggestion, King Kong wouldn't have been a playable character.

40**Devil May Cry**

■ PS2 ■ 2001

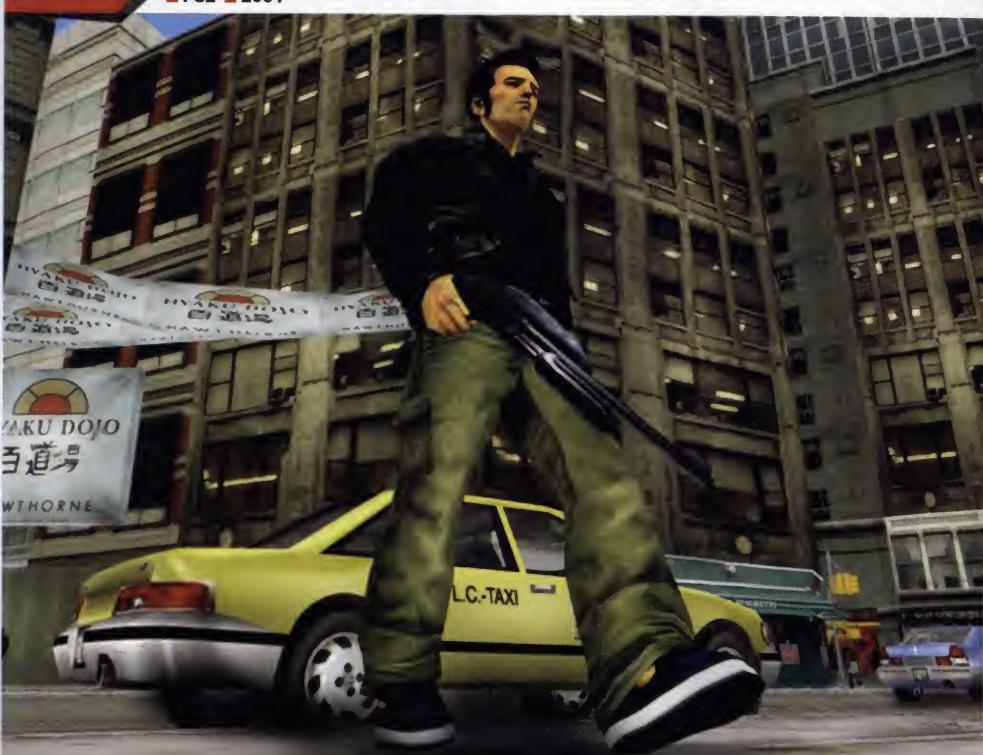


Okay, so Dante has an emo fringe and some sissy boy 'issues', but he also has two big guns that he'll stick up your ass until they go 'click click click'. Cooler than Shaft, and tougher than Bob Hope's leathery corpse, *Devil May Cry* is one of the PS2's best.

BEST BIT: The mucho cheesy "I was supposed to fill your dark soul with liiiight..." line.

39**Grand Theft Auto III**

■ PS2 ■ 2001

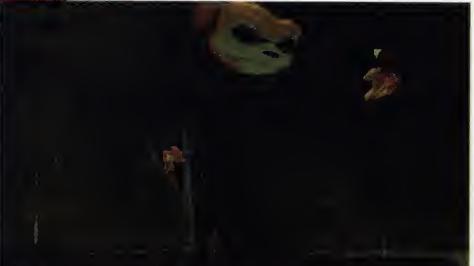


Rockstar's revolutionary crime sim was the single most influential PS2 game. While the bulk of developers were making prettier PSone games, Rockstar rewrote the rulebook with a huge interactive city and almost limitless freedom. Instead of funnelling players through a series of randomly detached linear levels, *GTAVIII*'s urban sprawl offered gamers a radical new blend of exploration, objectives and mayhem in the one intoxicating experience. Even though Rockstar's masterpiece has dated considerably, its compelling narrative, clever comedy and gritty atmosphere remain just as engrossing today.

FAMOUS FOR: Being banned over a tenuous depiction of a sex crime.

38**Daxter**

■ PSP ■ 2006



Most games ported to the PSP seem half-assed, rushed, and inevitably suffer from the lack of a second analogue stick, but *Daxter* manages to elevate itself above the riff raff with a redesign that plays to the handheld's strengths. Focusing on platform aspects, *Daxter* seems custom made for the PSP.

FAMOUS FOR: Bringing perennial sidekick Daxter to the centre stage.

37**Black**

■ PS2 ■ 2006



Black set out to create a shooter with the intensity and carnage of the iconic lobby scene from *The Matrix* and it succeeded admirably. *Black* assaults your senses with an orgy of explosions and collateral damage. This is gun porn at its finest.

FACT: *Black* is the second gaming success story to be created by Alex 'Burnout' Ward.

36**Destroy All Humans!**

■ PS2 ■ 2005



Pandemic's amazing alien invading rampage was criminally overlooked by most. It had body snatching, death rays, telekinesis, UFOs, jetpacks AND anal probing. Not even the thoroughly decent sequel could manage to overshadow the original's charm.

BEST BIT: Zapping a human with your death ray and watching their charred skeleton crumble into ash.

35**Tomb Raider**

■ PS ■ 1996

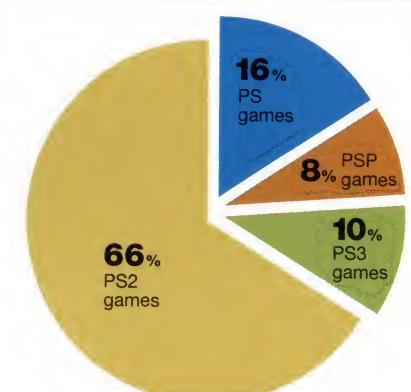


Roundly praised for its innovative gameplay, massive 3D worlds, cinematic presentation and sophisticated plot, *Tomb Raider* made a massive splash on the young PlayStation. The original and the best.

FACT: Core decided that puzzles should be more important to the game than action and found these were better suited a female character than a classic male action hero.

Number Crunching

- 5 Games featuring monkeys (or apes)
- 13 Games starting with the letter G
- 10 First-person shooters
- 14 Racing games
- 65 Games featuring a male main character
- 4 Games featuring a female main character
- 16 Games where the main character's sex is up to you
- 1 Game where the main character is a dog
- 2 Weeks it took to finish the list
- 15 Times a little piece of Mark died when something was put in front of *Okami*
- 2 Games featuring 'Freebird' by Lynyrd Skynyrd
- 3 Games based on movies
- 2 Games pimped by Tom Clancy
- 6 Games featuring the words 'Grand Theft Auto'
- 7 Games featuring metrosexual leads



50% Paycut threatened by Naz if we vetoed *Maximo*

34 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
PSP 2006

Liberty City Stories was anchored with weak, linear mission structures, but the sequel had no such problems. *Vice City Stories* featured all the grandeur of GTA's PS2 equivalents, without sacrifice or downscale. Undoubtedly the landmark with which all other PSP games are judged.

BEST BIT: Sgt. Martinez's obsession with bestiality. We'll say no more.

33 Tekken: Dark Resurrection
PS3 2007

This was a contentious one. *Tekken 3* was very fondly remembered, but *Tekken 5* improved on it in every way and since *Dark Resurrection* is essentially a prettied-up version of it, we decided it was the most deserving chapter in the *Tekken* series.

BEST BIT: Unofficial Bruce Lee, Marshal Law's "waaaaah" punch combo.

32 Ninja Gaiden Sigma
PS3 2007

This last gen classic gets a sprinkle of high-definition pixie dust, and shines on the PS3. Running at 60fps in full 1080p, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* also manages to be one of the smoothest gameplay experiences in the market. A must buy whether you've played the original or not.

FACT: Sigma, in storyline terms, actually bears no resemblance to the NES original.

31 TimeSplitters: Future Perfect
PS2 2005

There may be prettier PS2 shooters but none can match *TimeSplitters'* variety or its sheer bulk of infinitely playable content. With time-travelling antics involving zombies, aliens and WWI, and the best multiplayer mode this side of *Resistance*, *Future Perfect* is aptly named.

BEST BIT: Fighting alongside past versions of yourself – Back to the Future-style.

30 Mashed: Fully Loaded
PS2 2005

A simple, isometric racer that really wasn't much chop on your own but was damn near unbeatable with four players. Simple yet resoundingly effective, *Mashed* is proof that rock-solid gameplay beats the pants off high-end visuals any day of the week.

BEST BIT: Pulling off a successful airstrike on a cocky mate after being knocked out of a race.

29 Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance
PS2 2003

Unjustly demonised for its indulgent cut-scenes and the über-fey 'Raiden', the fact that *MGS2* still pulled through to become one of the PS2's best is tribute to the ingenuity of its design. Cranking everything we loved about the original up a notch, *MGS2* is a worthy entry into the legendary franchise.

BEST BIT: Raiden being told by his own nano-machines to 'turn off the console'. Many gamers actually did!

28 God of War
PS2 2005

This game came out of nowhere to claim '2005 Game of the Year' bragging rights. It mixed a deep combat system with clever puzzle solving and set it against an epic mythological backdrop. Get it now, for God's sake.

FACT: Kratos is the hardest bastard to ever set foot in a videogame.

27 Pro Evolution Soccer 6
PS2 2006

The Zidane to *FIFA*'s pretty boy Beckham, *Pro Evo* was always the true soccer fan's game of choice. Excellent AI, perfectly balanced passing and dribbling mechanics. Are we willing to sacrifice some licensed teams for this particular brand of awesome? We sure are.

FAMOUS FOR: Being the best damn sports sim on the planet – no question.

26 Freedom Fighters
PS2 2003

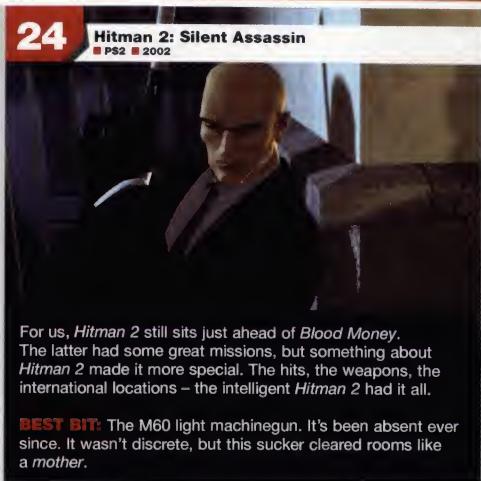
This was an unforgivably underrated squad-based shooter from *Hitman* creator IO Interactive. Set in an alternate present where the Soviets have invaded Manhattan, *Freedom Fighters* is one of the best third-person shooters ever.

FACT: Main character Chris and his brother are plumbers from New York City, not unlike two other famous videogame plumbers – only they're not Italian.

25**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3**
■ PS2 ■ 2002

Undoubtedly the greatest game in the franchise. When Activision tried to transform its legendary franchise into a *GTA*-esque 'sandbox', removing everything that was innovative and fresh about *Tony Hawk's*, something was lost and the series hasn't recovered since. *THPS3* came just before the fall, and contains everything we love about the series: collecting 'S-K-A-T-E', hunting endlessly for the elusive secret tape, two million+ trick combos on the luggage bottleneck in Airport, and Dark Jedi Grinding your way round the cruise ship. Was an entire genre unto itself until the series got too big for its boots...

BEST BIT: Unlocking Darth Maul!

24**Hitman 2: Silent Assassin**
■ PS2 ■ 2002

For us, *Hitman 2* still sits just ahead of *Blood Money*. The latter had some great missions, but something about *Hitman 2* made it more special. The hits, the weapons, the international locations – the intelligent *Hitman 2* had it all.

BEST BIT: The M60 light machinegun. It's been absent ever since. It wasn't discrete, but this sucker cleared rooms like a mother.

23**Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**
■ PS2 ■ 2002

While it only made minor improvements over *GTA III*, its '80s Miami setting suited the *GTA* style so well that it was exciting all over again. As usual, Rockstar was well ahead of the curve – as the glut of '80s-themed games since prove.

BEST BIT: Carpet-bombing enemies from your attack chopper with 'Billie Jean' blaring over the radio. Has there been a better soundtrack since?

22**The Darkness**
■ PS3 ■ 2007

The Darkness drips with just as much atmosphere as blood. This fantastic shooter gives you the choice of using guns, homicidal gremlins, heart-devouring tentacles or gravity-defying black holes to exterminate your opposition. Standard shooters seem downright ordinary by comparison.

BEST BIT: Sending in TNT-packing kamikaze Darklings and enjoying the fireworks.

21**Shadow of the Colossus**
■ PS2 ■ 2006

Most games have bosses, but this is the one game that only has bosses – and most of them are freaking huge. The brains behind the equally impressive *Ico* subvert the design structure of every game ever made, and in the process create something very special indeed.

FAMOUS FOR: Drop dead super ginormous bosses. It's like killing a skyscraper...

20**Gran Turismo 4**
■ PS2 ■ 2005

Over 700 cars from 80 manufacturers, dating back to 1886? All 20km+ of the Nürburgring Nordschleife? Unmatched visuals? *GT4* is the driving simulator, bar none.

FACT: Although conceding it had a flaw or two, *Top Gear* presenter Jeremy Clarkson claims, "This game would only be more real if a big spike shot out of the screen and skewered your head every time you crashed."

19**Final Fantasy VII**
■ PS ■ 1997

This was the game that single-handedly won the console war in Japan, as hundreds of thousands of Nintendo loyalists switched camps to get their hands on the most anticipated RPG of all time. You better believe it was worth the hype. *Final Fantasy VII* is easily one of the most important games of the past decade.

FACT: This was the first *Final Fantasy* to use 3D graphics.

18**Okami**
■ PS2 ■ 2007

You play as a dog that can paint with his tail and use it to transform the world around him. Yep, *Okami* is weird, and very 'Japanese', but that doesn't stop it being one of the best PS2 games ever made. Skilfully plays with the conventions of its genre to create something unique. A true masterpiece.

FAMOUS FOR: Its unique cel-shaded art style.

17**Ratchet & Clank 3: Up Your Arsenal**
■ PS2 ■ 2004

Insomniac's love affair with platforming antics and exotic weaponry reached its intense climax with *R&C3*. Stunning visuals, pixel-perfect controls and the most outrageous weapons in history made this an essential platform classic.

FACT: This was the first game in the series to introduce a multiplayer mode (something that the less successful sequel *Gladiator* focused too heavily on).

Rotten Eggs

You've seen the best of the best – now check out the worst of the rest.

Sonic The Hedgehog (PS3)
How do we loathe thee? Let us count the ways...



Mobile Suit Gundam: Target In Sight (PS3)
Wild horses couldn't drag this heaping bucket of bolts into the top 100.

The History Channel: Great Battles of Rome (PS2)
Holds the dubious honour of being the lowest scored game in OPS thus far.



Underworld: The Eternal Conflict (PS2)
Even the movie was better than this amateur-hour shocker, and the movie was shit.

Spawn: The Eternal (PS)
Described by many as one of the worst games ever. We don't disagree.

Bubsy 3D (PS)
Who the hell is Bubsy, you ask? This game is why you don't know.

**12 Final Fantasy XII**

Many fans, including us, believe that *Final Fantasy XII* is the best in the series since *VII*. Revamping the archaic turn-based system was an absolute masterstroke, raising the immersion level ten-fold. For many it was the game of 2006.

FACT: To this day Hironobu Sakaguchi, the creator of the *Final Fantasy* series, refuses to play *Final Fantasy XII* beyond the introductory credits.

16 V8 Supercars 3

GT4 may be the driving simulator, but *V83* is the racing simulator. Intense, doorhandle-to-doorhandle pack racing, 21 cars on track, terminal damage, crisp visuals and amazing attention to detail – *V83* is the duck's nuts.

BEST BIT: Turning out of Forrest's Elbow onto Conrod Straight at Mount Panorama and flooring it. Feel the thunder – be the thunder!

14 Metal Gear Solid

Arguably the greatest original PlayStation game ever made. This game is like a collage of magic moments: taking down the chopper, the battle with Sniper Wolf, the spectacular end sequence; all tied down with a peerless storyline that nothing has come close to since.

BEST BIT: Psycho Mantis screaming, "WHY CAN'T I READ YOUR MIND?!?!?"

15 Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

A sweeping, swashbuckling, romantic adventure noted for its picturesque environments and architecture, wonderfully smooth animation, ingenious use of time-travel to rewind mistakes and fluid, free-flowing acrobatics. The best remake ever? We wouldn't disagree.

FACT: *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* is currently being adapted into a feature film.

13 Devil May Cry 3

After the disappointing second instalment, *DMC3* marked a return to form for the original 'hard action' classic. As well as being one of the hardest PS2 games ever, it also wowed gamers with a sublime combat system and a constant stream of King Kong-sized boss encounters.

FACT: A later Special Edition release saw the addition of Dante's brother Vergil as a playable character.

10 Guitar Hero II

Take the awesomeness of the original and multiply it to the power of ROCK (which is like, a hundred). Co-op mode (lead, rhythm and bass) has us turning this up to 11.

BEST BIT: Nailing Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Freebird' for the final encore, hopping on the alien mothership and shooting into space, leaving behind 'Live and Let Rock' written in the stars. Tear.

Our thoughts...

Naz
Editor

"We thought, 'Hey let's compile the ultimate list of PlayStation games. That'll be a great way to kill an afternoon.' A week later we were still arguing whether *Hitman 2* was better than *Hitman: Blood Money* or whether our rose-tinted memories of *Devil May Cry* deserved to push it in front of the technically superior *DMC3*. Despite all the bitching and grumbling I feel really good about this list. It reminds me of all the great games I've enjoyed over the years and definitely had me popping down to my local store to fill a few holes in my collection."



Phill
Art Director

"What the hell? *Monster Hunter*... 98? Come on guys. Obviously you haven't played the game! I think it belongs more between the 60s and 50s. Truly a low blow. This monster slasher helped me through the long train rides to and from work and I've accumulated over 150 hours. A few oldies that I'd like to have seen in here are *Soul Reaver*, *Dino Crisis* and *Xenogears*. Saying that, I can just imagine Narayan and Luke looking at me weird, shakin' their heads. 'What? You don't like it? Find someone else to design the mag!' Sigh..."



Luke
Deputy Editor

"Phew, what a list. I would've liked to have seen the original *Syphon Filter* move up about 50 notches – damn that game is amazing – but overall I'm pretty content here. There are plenty of classics here I'll never part with including *FlatOut 2*, *Driver*, *Freedom Fighters* and *The Warriors*. Gold. Even *Urban Chaos* slipped in at 100. In my perfect world I'd probably squeeze in *Syphon Filter 2*, *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*, *Hogs of War* and *Team Buddies* over... say, anything with *Final Fantasy* in the title, but hey – I'm weird like that."



Mark
Staff Writer

"All right, all right – if Naz, Luke and the rest of these magazine monkeys put dual magnums to my skull you might just get me to admit we created the perfect list, but I still have some complaints. No *Escape From Monkey Island*? Ach well, maybe it's just me. And *Jak II* in the top 10? Lay off the crack pipe fellas. I have a laundry list of complaints, but in the end I feel like we've made a pretty solid list. These roundtable things are tough, but I still can't believe we left *Ico* out of the top 50 because Naz said that holding hands was a bit gay. Tear."

**09** **Soul Calibur II**

■ PS2 ■ 2003

It was a close call, but we feel that *Soul Calibur II* is the greatest beat 'em up on any Sony system, even outdoing its successor, *Soul Calibur III*. Combining the fluidity of *Dead or Alive* with the precision of the *Virtua Fighter* series, this franchise leaves all competition trailing in its wake.

FAMOUS FOR: All but eliminating button bashing from the 3D fighter.

**08** **Jak II: Renegade**

■ PS2 ■ 2003

After a totally solid but unspectacular original, *Jak II: Renegade* pinched GTA's open-city template, cranked the graphics up to 11 and created an unbelievably compelling futuristic action blockbuster. Not even *Jak 3* (more evolutionary than revolutionary) could match it.

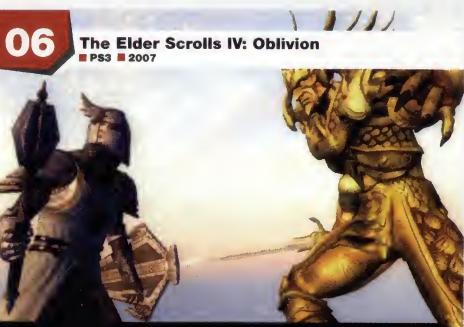
FACT: The second *Jak* was the ultimate, but the first and third *Ratchet* games were better than their *Jak* counterparts.

**07** **Burnout 3: Takedown**

■ PS2 ■ 2004

We'd always been big fans of the *Burnout* series but we had no idea just how hard *Burnout 3* would rock our world. This utterly amazing orgy of twisted metal is one of the few games that, even in single-player, can entertain a room full of gamers for hours.

FAMOUS FOR: Inventing the 'Takedown' – where demolishing opponents added juice to your nitro tank.

**06** **The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**

■ PS3 ■ 2007

The closest gaming has come to creating a genuine living, breathing world. The scope is breathtaking: like jacking into a gorgeous, medieval 'Matrix' within which the possibilities are quite literally endless...

BEST BIT: Walking out of the dungeon for the first time and being blown away by the size and detail of Bethesda's masterpiece.

**04** **MotorStorm**

■ PS3 ■ 2007

"Welcome... to *MotorStorm*..." and a game that quite literally does take you on a rollercoaster. When rendered target footage was shown to gamers at E3, some were sceptical. No game could really look that good... could it? Well, if you've had the absolute pleasure of playing *MotorStorm*, then you'll know that the answer to that question is a resounding yes. We believe it to be the best game on the PS3 to date, and that's with some pretty stiff competition. Beyond the retina searing graphics lies a CPU AI that supersedes anything we've seen in any racer to date. If there's a better-looking racer on any system, we've yet to see it.

FAMOUS FOR: The mud: the glorious, interactive, shimmering mud!

**05** **God of War II**

■ PS2 ■ 2007

The best game of the PS2's evergreen era, *God of War II* will likely be the last great game developed exclusively for the console. It's by no means a revolutionary leap in gameplay – but the way it combines action, adventure, puzzle-solving, colossal boss battles and Greek mythology is nothing short of perfect. Epic in every single sense of the word.

BEST BIT: Killing... well, we don't want to spoil it...


Anthony
■ Writer

"Good to see *The Thing* represented. Possibly the best film of all time, made into a damn fine game. Now everyone go buy three copies so we get a next gen sequel. *Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror* and *Portable Ops* rocked my world on long flights. Seriously, I found it hard to believe I was playing a PSP... but that could have been the meds I was taking to fly. Naturally *GTA* takes the top spot. Let's see if that's still the case in 12 months. The face-off between *RE5*, *MGS4* and *GTAIV* is going to be written about in years to come in song... and blogs."


Dave
■ Writer

"Nice to see some of my personal faves finally getting a tip of the cap. I've been waving the *Beyond Good & Evil* flag for ages and it's a goddamn crime that *Freedom Fighters* never got the recognition it so rightfully deserves. It's still the best freakin' squad-based shooter out there. I would've liked to have seen the *Final Fantasy* titles a little higher up the ladder, but hey, three in the top 100 ain't bad! I guess I should say something about *Oblivion*, but its awesomeness alone leaves me lost for words..."


Nick
■ Writer

"A very solid top 100 in terms of PS2 and PS3 selections. It's good to see *Monster Hunter* getting a nod. It's definitely my favourite new franchise in recent years and between its various iterations I've sunk over 300 hours into the 'Hunt' to date. The chaotic *MotorStorm* definitely deserves the PS3 pole position at this stage. Still, the unforgivable absence of some PS classics like *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, *Resident Evil 2*, *Silent Hill*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* and *Vagrant Story* has certainly left me scratching my head."


James
■ Writer

"100 games at 15 hours each... That's 1,500 hours of gaming. And boy do we know how to game binge with some of these golden girls. I was an *MGS3* junkie, engaging the enemy before going to bed after massive nights on the town. Additionally, I have a PhD in *Soul Calibur II*, and *Burnout 3* taught me how to drive. *Pro Evo Soccer* also strengthens my family ties, being the only reason my brothers visit me. Folks, this list is solid. For mine, the only omissions are *LOTR: Return of the King* and *SOCOM: US Navy SEALS*."

03

Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence

■ PS2 ■ 2006



Word to George Lucas, this is how a prequel should be done. Criminally, *Snake Eater*, the best game of the *MGS* series, is also the least played of the three. Taking the franchise back to its jungle roots allowed Kojima to create one of the most immersive and interactive environments of all time, complete with animals, mushrooms and plants that were all essential to your survival. Evolving familiar *MGS* features and adding new ones all combined to make this the ultimate *Metal Gear* experience. And that ending? We're man enough to admit we shed a tear...

BEST BIT: The undisputed best boss battle in history: sniping it out with 'The End'.

02

Resident Evil 4

■ PS2 ■ 2005



After ruling the survival horror genre on PlayStation, the *Resident Evil* series looked set to drown in mediocre spin-offs on PS2, that is, until *RE4*. Capcom ditched the confined camera angles and "Boo!" scares of the prequels and opted instead for super slick third-person heroics against a fierce new breed of zombies that wielded weapons, sprinted and even dived through windows to chase you. Monstrous bosses and THE best PS2 graphics ever didn't hurt either.

BEST BIT: You think you're safe behind a barricaded door when a chainsaw-carrying psycho carves through it and decapitates you.

01

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

■ PS2 ■ 2004



There really isn't much left to be said that hasn't been said before – by us, by other critics and the millions of gamers that bought a copy. *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* truly is THE defining game on PS2 – and so far, the best game on any PlayStation console, ever. There are plenty of other games that look better, and there are plenty that even trump it in one or two other departments. However, the things that other games do better than *San Andreas* pale in comparison to the things *San Andreas* does that no other games do at all. *San Andreas* blew its forebears out of the water. Rather than one city, *San Andreas* featured an entire state and three cities – each connected by vast tracts of countryside, forest and desert, which were dotted with small towns. No other game comes remotely close to offering the same level of freedom as *San Andreas* does. You can drive, walk, run, swim, fly, ride and jump anywhere you want. All the time. If you can see it, you can go there. If it moves you can hijack it. If it shoots at you, you can shoot back. Almost anything is possible. Buzzing the casino-lined strip in a cropduster? Check. Nicking a combine harvester and ploughing hapless armed goons? Check. Burning up a field of marijuana and escaping in a Kombi with 'The Horse With No Name' oozing from the stereo, playing pool, jumping off a mountain on a pushbike and parachuting to safety, competing in a triathlon, plucking an armoured car off the street with a helicopter, going dancing, piloting a jumbo jet underneath a bridge, diving for oysters in the bay, base jumping from skyscrapers, pimping out stolen cars, derailing a train onto a highway and skidding traffic, pinching a jump jet and dogfighting with enemy planes above the desert, shooting hoops...? Check, check and... well, you get the point. It's good to be the king.

FACT: You think this is good? Check out page 76...

PlayStation®2



PG

Mild gambling references

Live in your living room

Compete in the most thrilling of game shows, without leaving your sofa. Whether you're a sports fanatic, movie buff or are in tune with the latest music, put yourself to the test against up to 7 other contestants. Beat the buzzer, as well as your friends, family and rivals. With over 5000 general knowledge questions and hundreds of pictures and video clips, this is not just a game, this is a Mega Quiz.

BuzzTheGame.com



Words: Mark Serels

Just Like Heaven...

We're betting that if you asked most guys what their ideal slice of heaven is, spending some quality time with a fiery redhead, sporting a set of pendulous jugs and a flimsy piece of cloth that barely covers her pert ass cheeks, wouldn't be too far off the top of the list. But chillax... before you call the cops, or worse, our wives, we're talking about *Heavenly Sword*: a game that looks set to drag the primitive button bashing 'slasher' into the next generation.

But let's take it easy on poor Nariko for a second: it's almost too easy to perv. Sure we could go on forever about how 'heavenly' it would be for ol' fire-crotch to get a firm grip on our 'sword', but that wouldn't be very ethical would it? Especially when there's a genuine AAA title to be discussed and drooled over – and trust us when we say, it should be drooled over. Let's put it another way: when Sony was doing the hard sell, attempting to convince the Australian media that the PS3 was the ultimate games machine of the future, two games were shown in particular: one was *MotorStorm*, and the other... was *Heavenly Sword*.



■ Beauty and the Bulk

■ We bet she doesn't give great head

Heavenly Sword is a game that staples its influences to its sleeve. It makes no bones about its focus on eastern culture, and despite being part of what is possibly the most testosterone-fuelled genre in 'mandom', it manages to retain a subtle femininity in the same way that Chinese movies such as *Hero* and *House of the Flying Daggers* managed to suck in the female population with the 'kung fu movie as chick flick' aesthetic. It really is a marvellous combination of pretty backdrops for the 'ladies' and heaving knockers for the 'gents'.

But, finally... onto the game itself
Upon our first quick play through of *Heavenly Sword*, our instinct was to firmly categorise the game as a God

of War knock-off, albeit a knock off delivered in deliciously sweet high definition style. There are numerous similarities and, as such, it was an easy mistake to make. There is your standard light attack button, coupled with the usual suspects: the 'jump', 'heavy attack', and 'grab' buttons. So far so generic, but we weren't troubled, in fact we barely noticed – the whole thing was so slickly presented and smooth that thoughts regarding unoriginality never really filtered through.

Stylin'

A second play commenced, however, and the depths of *Heavenly Sword*'s combat system slowly began to reveal themselves. The game is instantly accessible: your resident button jabbers

will have no problem jumping in and racking up impressive and spectacular combos from the get go. In fact, on easier difficulty settings the game seems to almost reward such endeavours. When surrounded by a multitude of enemies most gamers will instantly devolve and start bashing 'light attack' like a caged monkey, and this course of action is usually successful. If you take advantage of the in-depth control system, however, your skills will transform, taking you to another level, and you'll rip through the bad guys like a kid eating a cupcake... a really delicious cupcake... with loads of icing... and a cherry.

Utilising the **T1** button, players can quickly switch between three distinct fighting styles, each completely autonomous and designed to suit the

many different situations the game throws at you. Speed stance is the 'Jet Li' of the three – technical, precise, packed with cinematic reversals and spectacular lightning strikes. Power stance, however, is a bit more like Chuck Norris: powerful, crushing... deadly. The final fighting style, the 'range' stance, allows you to take out multitudes of weaker enemies with ease, instantly separating the wheat from the chaff, enabling you to focus more time on tougher bad guys.

From what we've seen so far, Ninja Theory has the balance almost right, with an instantly playable combat system that evolves into something more in-depth. Casuals, the hardcore, and everyone in between will find something to love about *Heavenly Sword*.



Bustin' the blocks

One of Ninja Theory's main focuses during the early development of *Heavenly Sword* were the cinematics. But by cinematics we are not referring to the 30 minute-long expositional cut-scenes we have come to expect from big budget games, rather the cinematic experience. Through a combination of intense one-on-one battles, and pant-shredding epic encounters, *Heavenly Sword* wants you to feel like you have been dropped feet-first into a genuine blockbuster movie.

This drive for the cinematic led Ninja Theory to enlist Andy Serkis, aka Gollum

("We wants it") and King Kong (um... "RAR"); a move that has proved pivotal in *Heavenly Sword*'s development. Working with Serkis, and famous special effects company Weta (of *Lord of the Rings* fame), has given *Heavenly Sword* some of the most in-depth and believable in-game characters yet seen. Utilising the same top-of-the-line tech famously used in his performance as 'Gollum', Serkis' King Botan reverberates with an uncanny realness that both CGI and real-time 3D graphics have only hinted at until now. In terms of in-game acting, and character believability, *Heavenly Sword* is a real breakthrough. The advanced motion-capture technique allows players

to empathise with characters on a whole new level.

A 'hot as Hades' lead character, ground-breaking graphics, an innovative control system, coupled with an unprecedented number of enemies on screen simultaneously... where can *Heavenly Sword* possibly go wrong? Well it's difficult to pinpoint any specific weaknesses, but we have slight concerns that the game might reward the button bashers over the hardcore a little too much. There's no point in having an intricate, in-depth combat system if it's more efficient-to mindlessly mash your

way through the story. We're convinced that the demo we saw had the difficulty set low for ease of play, but we often found it little too easy to ignore finesse and employ slightly cruder means of attack to ensure victory.

But even if the balance doesn't shift for the final product, there is little doubt as to *Heavenly Sword*'s AAA calibre. From a presentation standpoint the game is simply peerless, and if there was ever an argument that awesome graphics aid gameplay then *Heavenly Sword* would be exhibit A. We are convinced you will be in for a genre-defining experience, when the game is released in September.

Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting

We recently had the chance to chat with Tameem Antoniades, Chief Designer on *Heavenly Sword*

OPS: Tell us a bit about Nariko's character and background.

Nariko was born into a clan who had been guarding the Heavenly Sword for generations. They had been expecting a god to be born to reclaim the sword but instead got Nariko. She is seen as a curse on the clan ever since,

and when King Bohan invades, the idea of her being an omen of evil fractures the clan. As the King persecutes and decimates the clan, she is the one that many blame. In a moment of desperation

she decides to take charge and use the Heavenly Sword to destroy King Bohan and his invading army.

As the Heavenly Sword was meant for a god, any mortal who wields it dies within days as it sucks their strength away. The game will start with Nariko dying on the battlefield holding the Heavenly Sword.

Right at the moment of death, she gets a chance to relive the days that led to her death. You get to play these moments in an attempt to reach a higher understanding of your life.

OPS: Just how many wushu films did you need to watch before coming up with *Heavenly Sword*?

You have to start with the Shaw Bros collection, go through into all the '80s and early '90s period Hong Kong movies, throw in some Japanese Kurosawa epics, modern Chinese epics like *Hero*, then branch out to stuff like Japanese movies and anime such as *Versus*, *Princess Mononoke*, *Princess Blade*, Korean stuff like *Musa*, Thai movies like *Ong Bak* and western interpretations like *Matrix*.

There are quite a few kung fu and samurai movie buffs on the team, including myself. I am satisfied that we have created a fantasy setting that feels grounded and could easily be built upon in future. We tried to create a hero that

was strong and beautiful yet vulnerable and tragic. In a way, I think we created a typical Eastern or European hero that focuses more on inner strength rather than the typical American one, which mostly focuses on outer strength.

OPS: Was the combat the first priority to get right? Is the combat similar to *God of War* or *Dynasty Warriors*?

Combat was always the priority. Ever since we finished *Kung Fu Chaos*, we have been developing our next gen combat engine. In terms of mechanics and controls, it is the unique free-form multi-stance combat engine, use of objects and weapons, and the scale of the encounters that sets this game apart. I would say the combat is unlike any of the games you mention above but it is in the same genre. It is a good evolution.

Your sword transforms into one of three stances by merely holding down the shoulder buttons as you attack. Speed stance is the most technical and good for countering, evading, quick



■ "Check me out! I'm so ripped I just snapped my leather g-string"

■ Nariko wished she hadn't looked up

■ "You think that's bad? I saw him coming out of the shower"

combos and juggling. Power stance is great for block-breaking, blocking heavy attacks and knocking enemies into other enemies. Range stance is good for clearing out large numbers of enemies so that you can focus on the tougher ones and also for deflecting arrows and sweeping objects at enemies. In addition, you have aerial combos, can pick up and throw pretty much anything in the environment, and use hand-held and mounted cannons in army situations. Games like *Ikaruga* and *Panzer Dragoon Orta* have demonstrated that you can have a puzzle element to action and this is an attractive direction for us.

OPS: Unless things have changed we noticed that *Heavenly Sword* doesn't feature a player-controlled camera. The *God of War* series has demonstrated how successful a dynamic camera can be but how much work have you put into *Heavenly Sword*'s camera to make sure it doesn't get in the way?

We use SIXAXIS as a look-around feature so you can peek left or right by tilting the controller while you fight.

When you throw any object, you can choose to go into Aftertouch where the camera follows the object from behind as you steer it by tilting the PlayStation 3's SIXAXIS controller.

We also use picture-in-picture where appropriate so that we do not interrupt gameplay with cut-scenes.

OPS: With the *Heavenly Sword* draining Nariko's energy, how have you addressed this in the game? Does it give the game a sense of urgency, and is it tough to balance?

As the Heavenly Sword was meant for a god, any mortal who wields it dies within days as it sucks their strength away. The game will start with you dying on the battlefield holding the Heavenly Sword. At the moment of death, you get a chance to relive the days that led to your death. So it is mainly a narrative device and won't limit your game-playing time. We did explore some mechanics to link it into gameplay but it was quite tough to play and felt like quite an alien concept to a lot of people so we dropped it.

OPS: How has the collaboration with WETA benefited development?

It's been more about just working

with Weta. We have strived to work with some of the best people in their fields, which is why we got Andy Serkis, Weta and Nitin Sawhney involved.

Andy has been invaluable. We at Ninja approached Andy because we knew we lacked the experience in casting, character development and on-set directing. We brought him on as a ninja and worked with him hands-on on the shop floor. He introduced us to Weta as he said that we were very similar in the way we worked and would get along just fine.

Going out to New Zealand with him, and the rest of the cast, then working at Weta for six weeks was an experience I will never forget. We would be on-set at 7am, work on the scenes till about 6pm, select takes until 9pm, edit until 12pm and repeat the whole process the next day for 6 weeks. We worked closely with them to make sure we could translate the data into PS3 art and code. The quality of the CG performances is quite a leap forward as a result.

OPS: What are the benefits of developing a title exclusive for a single platform? Does having your fingers in fewer pies at once allow for a greater level of polish?

The difference in coding for the three current next generation platforms is very large. If you are developing a multi-platform title, you are always going to be making compromises to make the game look and feel the same across all platforms. We are banking on the fact that our focus on one platform will take full advantage of the machine and help *Heavenly Sword* stand out enough to be sought after.

OPS: This is your first next gen title; have you found anything to be particularly liberating working with the PS3? Equally, have there any major hurdles?

The rendering engine is one of the best out there. We have true HDR lighting with 4xMSAA which is something that was considered impossible on the PS3. Every object in the game casts and receives soft shadows. We have around 2000-3000 enemies on-screen at one

time all running under their own AI. The facial performance capture is beyond anything I have seen before. It really is a stunning achievement by the team.

OPS: What distinguishes *Heavenly Sword* from other highly regarded slash 'em ups like *God of War*, *Ninja Gaiden* and *Devil May Cry*?

Heavenly Sword is a game that aims to create the feeling that you are in a blockbuster movie and that is what you will come away with. That cinematic ethos is carried through to the combat to make you feel like you are playing through an actual movie which is why we have collaborated with the likes of Andy Serkis, Weta Digital and Nitin Sawhney. We have fighting game-style encounters that range from one-on-one bosses, large groups all the way up to thousands of enemies. At the core of it, we designed *Heavenly Sword* to be a game that could only be achievable on next generation hardware and in this regard, we stand alone in this genre.

OPS: We spotted two characters in the TV show *Heroes* playing *Heavenly Sword* back in March – how did you score that neat bit of product placement?

We were as surprised as you were! We had no idea that had happened until it hit the web. Apparently, the show needed a game to be played and they asked someone they knew at SCEA and that was that!

OPS: What is it about *Heavenly Sword* that makes you most excited to get it into the hands of gamers?

Starting a game and getting it onto shelves are two different things. I am just glad that this game is actually going to be released soon! I just hope it lives up to expectations and is enjoyed by as many people as possible. That is what it is all about, is it not? ♦

She's on Fire...

Redheads: they are trouser tinglers aren't they? Here's a glimpse at some of the hottest redheads in history:

Lindsay Lohan



Most likely found 'powdering her nose', whilst drink driving her Beemer into the nearest lamppost, the self-destructive Lohan is still a bit of a looker.

Raquel Welch



Most famous for battling dinosaurs wearing a bikini in *One Million Years BC*, despite the fact that dinosaurs became extinct 65 million years BC.

Rita Hayworth



Well she's been dead for 20 years, which complicates things, but she was a total hottie back in the day.

■ "That's right ladies, I was Gollum... Wait, where are you going?"



The guys from Digital Extremes, known mostly for *Unreal*, wanted to show off their latest project. And we wanted to let them! So we wasted no time scooting across the globe to the Spanish city of Barcelona, to see *Dark Sector*'s progress in a better light.

The story goes like this: You're Hayden Tenno, an elite black ops agent sent into an Eastern European city called Lasria to look for a missing scientist. While on this mission, you get attacked by a monster and wake up the next day with metal infecting your

screens, but more on that later.

The screen darkened, and the haunting sound of footsteps echoing down a hallway burst through the speakers. We got our first glimpse of the protagonist, Hayden, in a dim, slime-tinged sewer. Josh explains straight away about the lack of a HUD. No health bars or anything are on the screen. The reason being that it keeps the player in the game, giving the action a more cinematic feel. "Instead of putting a big green arrow on his head, we're trying to have various things that push the player along. There's this big

Words: Gerard Ward

Heart of Dark Sector



We plunged into the depths of Digital Extremes' studio for the dirt on its disturbing new game, *Dark Sector*

right arm. From there, you'll be dodging monsters trying to finish you off, as well as other soldiers who take an instant dislike to your infected mutation. This does leave you between a rock and a hard place, but as the game progresses, not only are you evolving physically and gaining new powers, you also start to become a hero.

After pitching the intriguing plot to us, *Dark Sector*'s producer, Josh Austin, walked us through one of the game's early single-player levels. We also saw a brief mention of multiplayer pop up as Josh was navigating through the menu

shockwave coming from a beacon, and you're following it along to get to a point." It's undecided at this point exactly how ammo levels will be gauged in the game, although Josh is leaning towards having a flashing light on the gun as an indication.

After leaving the cramped confines of the sewers, we came upon a depressing courtyard, decked with decaying walls and the flaming remnants of some recent explosive combat. Nearby a man lies in a spreading pool of blood. "That's one of the civilians that didn't make it," Josh jokes.

Handy weaponry

The game's main weapon throughout is the Glaive, which shoots out of Hayden's arm. A three-bladed boomerang essentially, it has abilities that you unlock as you play the game. As well as being a weapon the Glaive can be used to traverse steep slopes, as we see when Hayden uses it to grind down a collapsed wall and into the tunnels below.

In front of him, a few guards attempt to flank left and right. Hayden runs and ducks behind a bench for cover. Aiming at the guard on his right, he throws the Glaive, and like a knife through butter, it

removes the head from the guard as his body collapses to the ground with a heavy thud.

After severing the second soldier's gun arm, Hayden picks up the machine gun from the lifeless limb and uses it to put an end to his howls of pain. Before long Hayden's recently acquired gun stops working. It turns





Glaive School

Dark Sector's three-bladed boomerang looks great, but you'll want to practice enough with it to avoid the pointy end when it comes back. This funky weapon has made other appearances in different shapes and sizes though.



KRULL

Blades: Five
A prince has to fight aliens to save his bride and his world, find the shiny Glaive and defeat the

big baddy. It was a shame the movie was about finding the Glaive, and not starting off with it, as it could have sported some very memorable scenes.



BLADE TRILOGY

Blades: Two and three
Goes with the name, but *Blade* had an assortment of... blades. The dual-bladed Glaive did some hefty damage to enemies unfortunate enough to feel either one of the pointy tips in the half-vampire's trilogy of films. *Blade II* had a three-bladed Glaive as well. We think someone's a little greedy.



■ Being able to sever limbs could cause *Dark Sector* grief with the OFLC



SOUTH PARK

Blades: Five
You've got to love Trey Parker and Matt Stone. In an Easter episode of *South Park*, Jesus pulls out a Krull Glaive to finish off a power-hungry Bill Donahue in a slow-motion 300 parody, then puts shades on after catching it in a cool *Blade* pose.



■ "Hey buddy, hold this for me!"

■ Coming up against Hayden costs enemies an arm and a leg

Dark Sector

We grabbed *Dark Sector*'s producer for a little chat about the eye candy, and we could tell from Josh Austin's enthusiasm that he's having a blast on the project.

OPS: Dark Sector has been evolving since 2000. It's been a long run for you guys. How has this process helped you and your team design and develop *Dark Sector*?

Josh Austin: Well the team's known for FPS games. It's very interesting because the game started out very short; small hallways, lots of staircases. So that was one thing they had to learn – to open things up. From the early days, it was sci-fi, but at the time when [the developers] were going around, they were pitching it to everyone and nobody would buy it because sci-fi was just not selling. So that's when they grounded it in reality, put it in this Eastern European

setting and based it off real life, basically so you could be more involved in the game's storyline.

OPS: Have visuals been the most time-consuming element for you and your team, or has it been the gameplay?

JA: It's a double thing, right. It's like gameplay has to be awesome, because you can't just have a beautiful game. There are games that have gone out that are beautiful and they just suck. So we're trying to hit the both of them. Graphics, these guys are amazing. We're not using the Unreal engine. This is their own engine, they created this engine. But the main programmer who created this engine is a graphics whore. So he's just focused on fixing it and

back into another group of monsters a huge explosion sends chunks of infected mutants splattering around the room. "Those are civilians who've been infected, so they're all messed up. Their molecules are very unstable, so if I light them on fire, they explode," Josh laughs.

As Hayden walks outside a storm of gunfire erupts and he's forced to take cover behind a beaten up Volkswagen. Clearing out a path with the Glaive, he hops over the sandbags in the middle of the road, but stops when a gigantic gorilla-like monster lurches into view. Before we know how to react, it throws a car into one building, and jumps off over another into the building, leaving a mess of destruction behind it. As Hayden runs down an alley after it, a streetlight gives Josh a chance to spark-up the Glaive. A

startled soldier opens fire but a lowball throw severs his foot and sends him staggering back against the wall.

Hayden uses his metallic arm to smash through a locked door and rush into the building. Dead soldiers are lying everywhere inside. The player loses control at this point as the game transitions to a cut-scene. The same King Kong-sized monster grabs Hayden from behind and throws him to one side of the room, and just as the Glaive comes out of his hand ready for a fight, the screen fades to black.

Dark Sector looks set to be so much more than another game with an interesting gimmick. With influences like *Resident Evil 4*, *Dark Sector* has the potential to offer something really fresh when it arrives on PS3 later this year. ■



making it the best-looking game. Meanwhile you have the other people making really great gameplay. So both of them are hand in hand.

OPS: With the finishing moves, because you have a choice to either run in and blast or sneak in, will fans of stealth be able to sneak through the whole game if they want to?

JA: Yeah! It's all based off sound. If I do that "Makes glaive sound" thing, and there's other guys around, they'll hear that. But if you do it cleverly, you could theoretically sneak through the game.

OPS: Will it be a solo fight?

JA: He talks with his agency sometimes. And that's outside communication, but we cut it off when his infection starts. So rather than having a typical "Hey, how're you doing?" check-in every 10 minutes,

we're not doing that. We're going to do that every once in a while, when you find a radio, you will have a few people inside in the game,

that you meet. And they'll tell you where to go next, and how to interact with the world, and stuff like that. So we've got some great things like that coming.

OPS: Will Hayden use the automatic cover feature...

JA: We took that out. We have to hit a button now. The reason why we took it out is that we didn't want to have the *Gears of War* thing. When you run, and all of a sudden you'll attach to a wall. We had that problem when we had automatic cover. You'll start running and then all of a sudden you'll latch on, and be like "I don't wanna do that!" It just looks sloppy, so we took it out and

made it a button. You hit the button and you can just walk off it.

OPS: Do you have any plans for the SIXAXIS at all?

JA: We have plans. I don't know what they will be, but we have plans. We have a lot of different ideas, but it's just what's fun. So we're working on that.

OPS: Constructing the game, what has been the biggest challenge for you and your team?

JA: The PS3.

OPS: Were there any features that you wanted to have in the game which didn't make it for one reason or another?

JA: One of them was a controller issue. Originally we had it so the arm would grow, and turn into different shapes. And you could do that by pressing a button. But it was just ridiculous because you'd

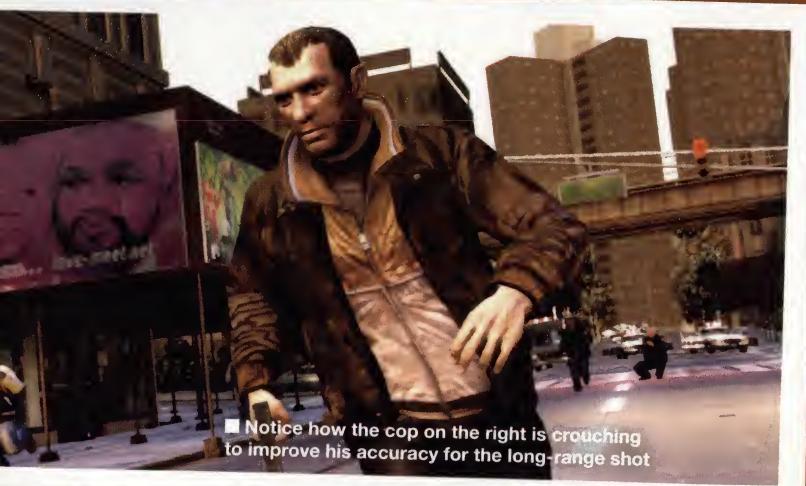
be like hitting a button and it'd switch to the arm that you didn't want to use. Stuff like that... we just took it out to simplify controls. Now we have it, that when the character grows, you get those kind of things. But you never lose what you started with. So we're trying our best to make it so that... You know those games where you get tonnes of combos but you never go back to the first combo? We're trying to keep it so that the Glaive is fun throughout the game. It gets more powerful. And you get more powerful, so at the end of the game, you're just f***ing everyone up. Everyone's getting destroyed... you're like a superhero. But we don't want to make it so you just lose what you had before. You know what I mean? And that was one of the problems we had, we had all these different arms that they'd basically morph into, but it was taking away from the experience, and slowing it down.



**Rockstar
doesn't make bad
games. There really
aren't too many other
developers out there who
can boast the same thing.
It's an admirable feat. What
it means is that we don't need
to tell you that its upcoming
opus, *Grand Theft Auto IV*, will
be good. If you have more
than a passing interest in
videogames you'll already
know that. But just how
good is it?
You have no idea...**

Words: Luke Reilly

Grand Theft Auto IV



■ Notice how the cop on the right is crouching to improve his accuracy for the long-range shot

If you were to look outside of OPS for a moment, there are two games that, above all others, are generating the most buzz in the media. With the greatest respect to the increasingly large slate of games we're looking forward to this Christmas, there are two in particular that aren't just being billed as the biggest hitters of 2007 – they're being touted by many as perhaps the most defining games of the decade.

One, if you believe most preliminary reports, will single-handedly blow your brain out the back of your skull, solve the world food crisis, lower petrol prices and have the first copy sold by Jesus himself.

The other is *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

Now, we're going to make this brief because we find commenting on games journalism itself is a pointless

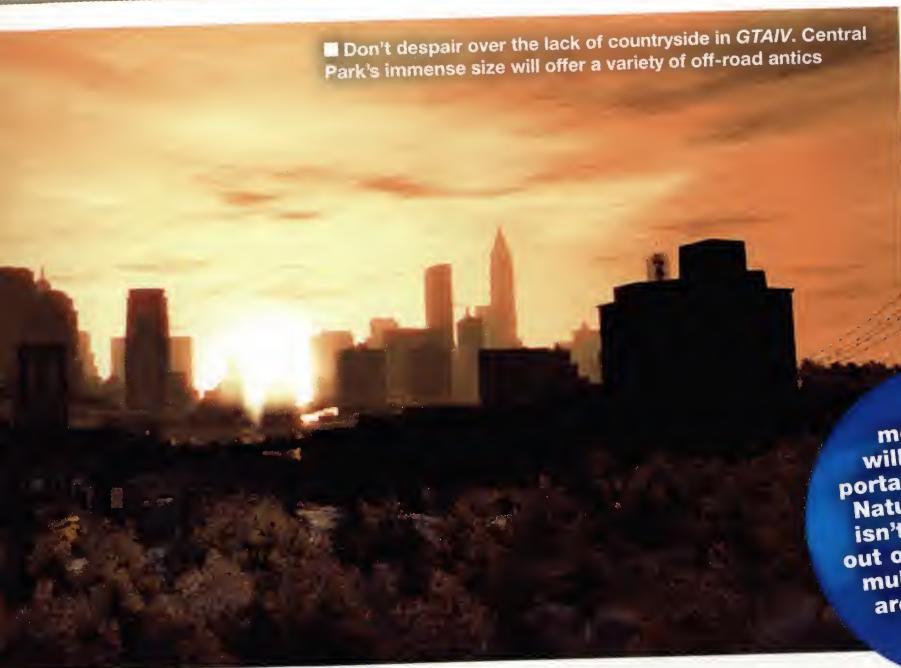
naval-gazing exercise – the preserve of the bored. That said, we couldn't help but notice how much the games press has fallen in love with a certain sci-fi shooter called *Halo 3*. We're not here to comment on the foibles or merits of what's otherwise a successful series – it would be childish and mostly irrelevant – so we'll give credit where credit is due. What we don't get, however, is how so many people seem to have fallen for their own bullshit.

Somehow they've managed to elevate this game above all else. Suddenly it's the best thing to hit mankind since the wheel, electricity or internet porn.

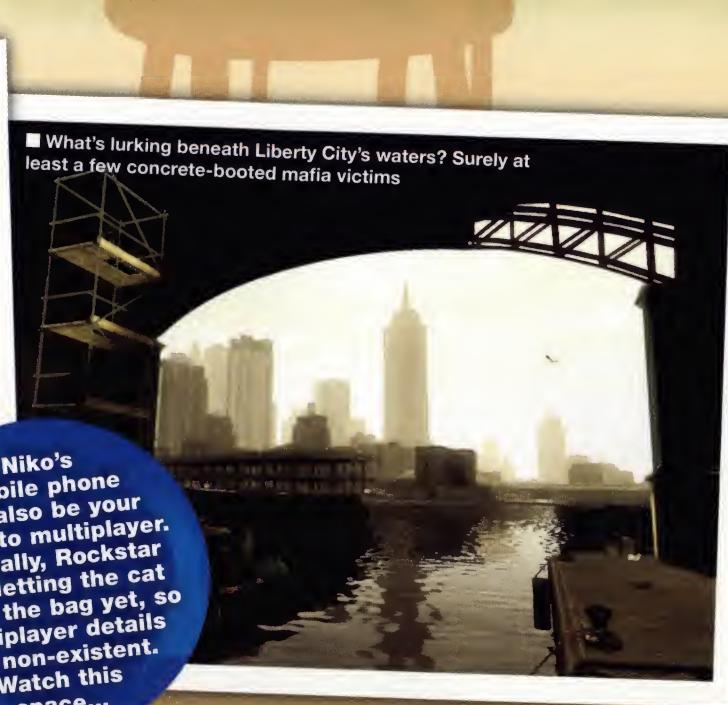
We're sorry friends, but this is not the case.

The numbers don't lie. Since *GTA III*,

■ Don't despair over the lack of countryside in GTAIV. Central Park's immense size will offer a variety of off-road antics



■ What's lurking beneath Liberty City's waters? Surely at least a few concrete-booted mafia victims



Niko's mobile phone will also be your portal to multiplayer. Naturally, Rockstar isn't letting the cat out of the bag yet, so multiplayer details are non-existent. Watch this space...

Rockstar has sold more than 60 million *Grand Theft Auto* titles. *GTA: San Andreas* alone accounts for a staggering 20 million of those. These colossal figures cast a giant shadow over Microsoft's flagship series.

No, without a doubt, 2007's landmark game is *Grand Theft Auto IV*. And we've just had the grand tour.

LAW AND DISORDER

It's been about an hour since the

presentation ended, but thanks to the realities of magazine deadlines (and that crossing the international date line does not, in fact, constitute some form of time travel) this piece was due 20 minutes ago. It's for this reason *OPS* is hunkered down in a Manhattan hotel feverishly tapping away at a keyboard instead of soaking up what's otherwise a very sunny, New York afternoon.

But it's no bad thing – we want to talk about *GTAIV* as much as we

imagine you want to read about it – so let's proceed.

One of the interesting introduction notes is that the team at Rockstar North has remained virtually unchanged since *GTAIII*. The effect that this consistency has on the confidence of the crew and the quality of the final product cannot be underestimated. What this means is that since the genesis of the idea, the same people have been working together to make it happen. *GTAIV*, as a result, is not

some hand-me-down sequel cobbled together by a team of ringers who never really understood the fundamentals of the franchise.

It's the *GTA* game Rockstar has always dreamed of making.

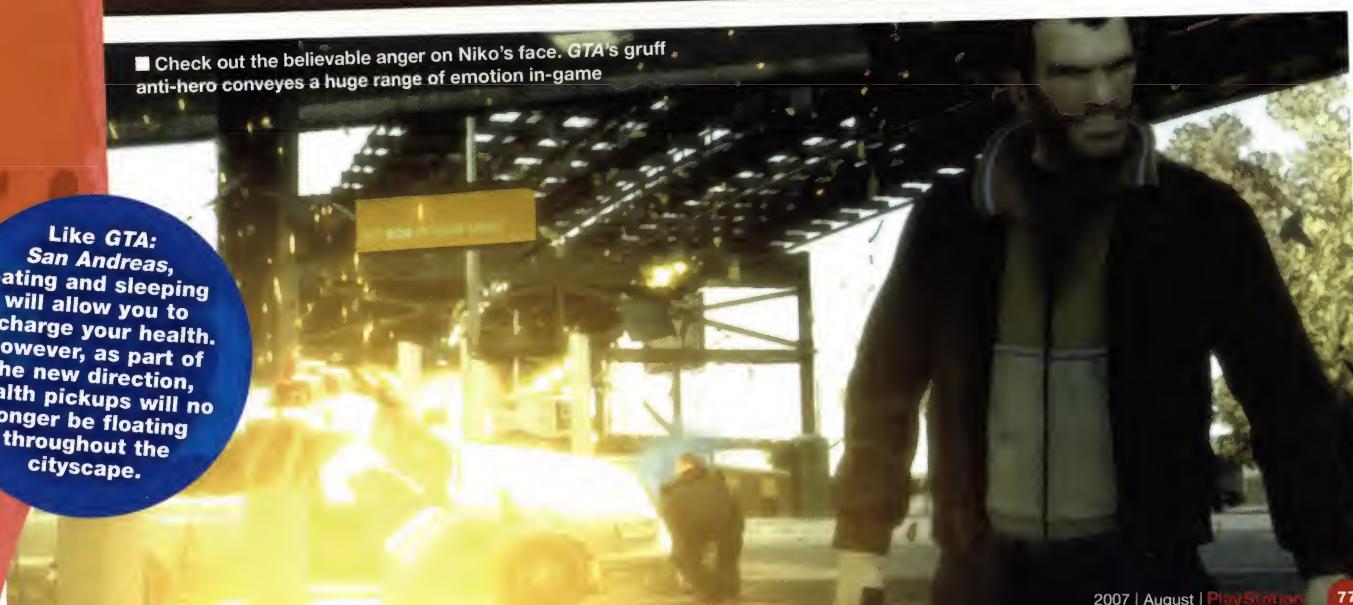
"With *Grand Theft Auto IV*, we're looking to completely re-define the genre and experience we created ourselves many years ago," says a Rockstar spokesperson.

What's perhaps most important to

FOR A

■ Check out the believable anger on Niko's face. *GTA*'s gruff anti-hero conveys a huge range of emotion in-game

Like *GTA: San Andreas*, eating and sleeping will allow you to recharge your health. However, as part of the new direction, health pickups will no longer be floating throughout the cityscape.



■ Cutting Niko off in traffic is not a mistake people ever make twice



The internet café Niko visited during our demo was called TW@. Rockstar is pruning some of San Andreas' silliness (don't expect to be able to stroll the streets in underwear with a pink Mohawk) but the sense of humour is clearly still intact.

Rockstar hasn't just named every borough and district – every street is individually named too. This is a first for the series.



note though, and this can't be understated, is that GTAIV is not GTA: San Andreas with flashier visuals. There have been radical changes, and while the basic formula remains intact, things are going to be different. It's still quintessentially GTA, but it's now so much more. It's more immediate, more authentic, and more intimate. It's a smaller world, but it's one that's positively dripping with depth. Rockstar is doing everything it can to make the experience so intuitive and believable that it feels natural. It wants you to glean a real sense of ownership over the character and surround you with a living, breathing and credible city, deeper than anything you've ever played before.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

For those who missed our previous coverage, GTAIV is, in the words of one Rockstar representative, the 'rags to slightly-better-rags' story of one Niko Bellic, a Russian immigrant with a shady past and a dodgy cousin. The seminal Liberty City is again the setting, only this time it's a great deal more like its real-world inspiration, New York City. After seeing Liberty City we can honestly say the similarities are remarkable

– something that's made abundantly clear each time we look out the window.

The architecture, the aesthetics – no other game has come this close to building a city this convincing. This... real.

By concentrating on density and detail rather than sprawling, generic space, Rockstar has a city that is infinitely more engaging than any other digital metropolis has ever been. It's tough to commit the amount of detail Rockstar has packed into its third iteration of Liberty City to paper – so many elements combine to create an unprecedented sense of immersion. The streets in New York City aren't all flat and well maintained. A lot of them are falling apart; patchwork quilts of tar band-aids and expanding potholes. Likewise, Liberty City's streets have been designed with that in mind. It's never quiet on the roads of Manhattan – it's a constant medley of horn blasts and sirens. Liberty City's traffic has been designed with that in mind too. The varied surfaces, the unique buildings, the far more individual pedestrians – the value of this kind of attention to detail is colossal.

It's the visual quality itself that may

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Call of D

GTA IV: Lim

very special SKU of GTA IV will include bodies in it.

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The rivalry between *GTA* and *Hitman* – evidently a lot more personal than we realised

We're still sworn to secrecy about *GTAIV*'s soundtrack, but the rest of the audio was a real highlight. Pistols bark with uncanny realism and bullets punch through car panels with a satisfying thwack.

astound most – the jump from *GTA: San Andreas* to *GTAIV* is nothing short of breathtaking (and there's no reason why it shouldn't be). Meticulously detailed buildings and storefronts line each and every street. The super-crisp car models also amaze – detailed right down to the demisters on the rear windshield. They even absorb persistent bullet holes. The characters are just as impressive, particularly in cut-scenes where the lip-synching and facial expression is spot on. *GTAIV* is leaps and bounds ahead of its peers.

DIE HARD

Our demonstration began with Niko standing in Star Junction, Liberty City's Times Square. He's not packing and he needs a piece. It's 2007, and you can't just walk into a store and buy a submachine gun these days, so Niko's primary source of hardware is back-alley gun runners and weapons dealers.

"In Liberty City you've got to know where and from whom you can buy serious gear. It might be basements,

car trunks, or from some survival nut in Alderney," explains one Rockstar spokesperson. "Guns are precious commodities. They're not going to be easy to get hold of."

Placing a call on his mobile to Little Jacob, a Jamaican with a trunk full of junk, Niko cues up a transaction in a side street nearby. He saunters to the location and buys a gatt. His task is to liquidate a lawyer, but to get close enough to put a bullet in the bozo a little subterfuge is in order.

Niko grabs a cab to an internet café and submits a pre-prepared and suitably fake resume via the law firm's website. He gets a call from the practice shortly afterward and cues up a meeting for noon the following day.

To pass the time, Niko gets on with another gig for a dodgy detective who has some sort of dirt on him. The flatfoot is being blackmailed and enlists Niko to identify the extortionist and snuff him out. Niko grabs a taxi to the meet, which is in a small public park on the river. He calls the poor sap on his mobile to pick him from the crowd and proceeds to execute him with two blasts to the head, in front of a few dozen

terrified bystanders.

Due to the severity of the crime and the presence of a few patrolling beat cops, police reaction is swift. Sprinting from the scene we notice how Niko leans into corners as he runs, and how his gait differs at different speeds. Niko halts beside a parked sedan and tries the door. It's locked, so he smashes the glass with his elbow and unlocks the door. Hot-wiring takes time, but Niko is soon on his way from the scene.

A prompt from his organiser reminds him about the job interview, but he'll need some new threads if he wants to get in, so he makes a brief stop at a menswear store. Properly attired, Niko drives to the law firm and enters the building. The secretary shows him to his mark's office, where, after exchanging a few pleasantries, he shoots him (out of a window, no less). The hit wasn't exactly discrete, so Niko needs to shoot it out with the security staff on his way out of the building – which

has been surrounded by cops in the interim. The firefight is a brief and, sadly for Niko, exceptionally one-sided. Our Russian rogue is soon suffering a terminal case of severe death. Shame, but it certainly was a spectacle.

The missions we saw were by no means an extensive portrait of what we can expect but they did illustrate a number of key changes to the series since *GTA: San Andreas* – importantly, the targeting controls and the wanted system. The targeting controls have received a number of tweaks, most notably now featuring the ability to take cover behind any object and blindfire over and around obstacles.

It's the wanted system overhaul, however, that's most intriguing.

The star system returns to indicate the amount of trouble you're in, but the way it works is quite different. In keeping with *GTAIV*'s more credible take on itself, the wanted system is a far more realistic one.

Boosting locked cars takes a lot more time than before. If you're on the run you need to decide whether you've got the time to bust the window and hot-wire the car before whoever's on your tail catches you. It heightens the tension significantly.



A flashing circle on your minimap will show you the current police search area, which is based on last known position and line-of-sight. Depending on how many stars you've been unlucky enough to earn, the circle will vary in size. To shake the fuzz you need to get far enough away to break contact and leave the search zone. If you're spotted, Liberty City's finest will call dispatch and redefine the search area. The police in *GTAIV* are far more tenacious and aggressive than in previous titles, so expect a tougher time of it.

With Rockstar ratcheting up the realism, you'll probably be less inclined to behave like a psychopath. Like you'd expect, shooting someone in public is a big deal and results in a brutal response from the law. It's a better, more credible system and we welcome it.

The cab rides we referred to are also well worth mentioning. We saw cabs for quick transport used to great effect in the otherwise shonky *True Crime: New York City* and they're just as useful in *GTAIV*. With a whistle and a wave Niko can flag a passing taxi and use it to take him anywhere in the city. At that

point you can either sit back and enjoy the ride or time-skip to your chosen location. Hailing cabs is a convenient time-saver for those who want to move things along, and also a useful way of staying out of trouble now that the cops are taking crime a little more seriously.

"Car-jacking is still an option but it's not always the best one," says a Rockstar spokesperson. "The police are more sensitive than they've ever been before. Jacking a car is not a minor offense, particularly if someone's in it."

We were also privy to how Rockstar is using common technology as tools within the game to push the story forward. Items that we're all very familiar with, like mobile phones and the web, make perfect sense within the game world. You'll use the phone to cue up missions, communicate with contacts and make requests to colleagues. The phone will put more decisions in your hands. What missions you feel are your biggest priority, who you choose to foster relationships with (and the consequences of those relationships) are all up to you.

"We really want to use the phone

as Niko's primary gateway into his life. His contact list, a daily calendar and organiser, text messages, camera, and multiplayer all work through his cellphone," says a Rockstar spokesperson. "That's something we can all identify with, because that's exactly how life is for us these days."

"It helps us hide the game mechanics in an interface that 99% of people playing the game are already intimately familiar with. It cuts down on learning curves and gets away from a lot of typical gaming conventions."

GTAIV's unique internet, still relatively mysterious at this point, was only briefly touched on, so its potential and its implications are unknown. Still, the Rockstar reps were fairly coy about it, so we're expecting something that far exceeds a mere gimmick.

"The internet acts as a kind of discovery tool, and an information aggregator for what's happening in the city. It's also another great way for Niko to communicate with his connections," explains a Rockstar spokesperson.

■ We don't know why Niko is hitching a ride like this, but we'd still give our left nut to play the mission

Unlike its predecessor, moving outdoors to indoors and vice versa is completely seamless. *GTAIV* has no loading times once you're in.

"He can access his account from any computer in Liberty City that has internet access."

WINNERS ARE GRINNERS

So there you have it. All the latest on the game that will redefine what we expect from the genre it calls its own. It's only a few short months away now, and it's going to be a phenomenon.

"We've been talking about experience a lot; it is because that's what this game is about. We don't believe one can look at our game and think of it as a set of features; you'd be completely missing the overall experience of playing the game," says one Rockstar spokesperson. "And the experiences games allow are the point."

"We believe videogames are on the cusp of becoming the dominant form of entertainment precisely because of the unique cultural experiences they allow."

Rockstar's own aim is for *GTAIV* to be THE defining next generation action adventure game. A lofty goal? Only if you're not already a winner. ▶

ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, reader online section and more!

WHAT'S NEW?

The latest PlayStation Store goodies

Accessing overseas PlayStation Stores

It's important to know that you don't have to get by with just the downloads on the Australian PS Store. You can setup overseas profiles on your PS3 and simply sign in as them to access the extra content available on the US and Hong Kong stores. To do this simply set up a new profile and enter an American or Hong Kong address. This way when you access the store using this profile you will be taken to the overseas stores. What's also cool is that once you start a download from an overseas store, you can switch back to your main Australian profile and start playing a game and it will continue to download the content you started with a different profile.



Australian Store

The Aussie store is currently chock-full of new content with three arcade classics (*Joust*, *Rampart* and *Mortal Kombat II*) available for \$5 a pop, a video about *MotorStorm*'s upcoming downloadable content and new trailers for *The Darkness*, *Lair* and *Haze*. By the time you read this Sony assures us that there'll be a host of new items available including a new track and Time Trial mode for *MotorStorm*, two new maps for *Resistance*, a handful of PSOne games and three original games: *Calling All Cars*, *Super Stardust HD* and *Go! Puzzle*.



USA Store

Other than the *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* demo (still absent from Aus) the USA store is weak this month with just new trailers of *Transformers*, *Hot Rod*, *Surf's Up* and *Heavenly Sword*.

Hong Kong Store

The HK store remains the most disappointing of the three with nothing new but *Blast Factor* multiplayer maps on offer.

LATEST FIRMWARE = 1.81

To make the most out of your PS3 you'll need the latest firmware. Here's a look at what firmware version 1.80 and the more recent 1.81 offer PS3 users.

1080p upscaling – PSOne games, PlayStation 2 games and DVD movies are now upscaled to full 1080p HD resolution when viewed on a compatible HDTV. This feature is not the default option though, so you will need to go into the Settings and turn on Game and DVD upscaling. The games and DVDs are only upscaled, not re-rendered at the higher resolution, so don't expect to see any dramatic differences.

Photo printing – You can now print photo images stored on PS3's hard disk drive or inserted storage media to a selection of Epson printers via USB connection.

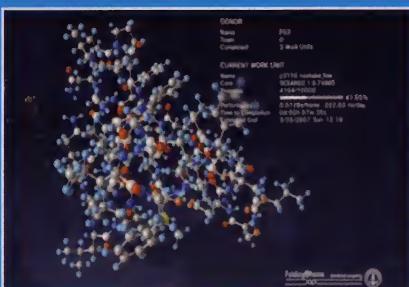
Background downloading – This is a far more convenient process for downloading content. Instead of staring at a download screen while you wait for stuff to download, up to six items from the PlayStation Store can be queued up and downloaded while you play games, browse the web or use the other media functions.

Folding@home – The Folding@home project allows PS3 users to connect a distributed computing project that uses the power of idle PS3s to research protein folding mechanisms in the hope that this will lead to medical treatments for related diseases.

Remote play – This feature allows you to access photos, videos, and music on your PS3's hard drive from a nearby PSP.

Backwards compatibility – Backwards compatibility software for around 2,800 PSOne and PS2 titles are now supported.

- Ability to play downloaded PSOne games
- PS2 Dualshock now has 'rumble' features when used with the PS3
- Saves accrued whilst playing PSOne games on PS3 can be transferred to the PSP
- "Full RGB" added to visual options for HDMI users with compatible HD TVs.



HOW TO UPDATE

Updating firmware is new to most PlayStation users so here are three ways it can be done.

1 System Update: If your PS3 is connected to the network you can easily update it via the PS3's 'System Update' feature.

2 PC: If you're not able to do this you can update it using a PC. Download the update data and save it on some form of storage media and insert it into your PS3. Copy the update data across and perform the upgrade. Download the data from here: <http://au.playstation.com/support/ps3/>

3 Games: You can update using disc media, using the firmware that is included on a game disc. We've been informed that games released post launch will feature the most recent updates available.

FIRMWARE REQUESTS

Wallpapers

– The PSP has wallpaper support. Why doesn't the PS3? It just doesn't make any sense.

Access to the Cross-Media Bar in-game

– Having to quit out to message a friend or see what your buddies are playing is a real pain in the arse. Access to this info and improved messaging seems like a must to us.

Backwards Compatibility

– Keep it coming. There are a few local games that aren't working yet. Also, *Gran Turismo 4* doesn't work either. Somebody may want to get on that, you know, it's only one of the most popular PS2 games... we don't know, ever?

Any others ideas? Send them to ops@derwenthoward.com.au and we'll print them right here.

F.E.A.R.

We ain't 'fraid o' no lag

■ Developer: MONOLITH ■ Publisher: VIVENDI ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 1-16

While the singleplayer side of *F.E.A.R.* is a wall-to-wall waterproof-underpants-wearing freak-fest, the multiplayer mode fails to live up to its potential.

Your main options for online warfare are Quick, Custom and Create. In terms of community there are Leaderboards but the only access you have to your friends is the ability to send them invite messages, which is a little pointless since you have no idea whether they're online or not without quitting out to the dashboard. We were shaking our heads and preparing to snap our controller after a couple of fruitless searches through the Quick game search. Luckily we hit paydirt with our first crack at the Custom game mode.

There are a fair range of game modes on offer, including the usual Deathmatch and CTF options. Unfortunately for us we were often left to the mercy of the host's selections. In one particularly

frustrating session we had to endure the same map repeated five times, during constant repetitions of the single-life Elimination mode. While this may be great fun for campers ("Yes, Deathspud17, we're looking at you") having only one life per game is torture for those who prefer the Rambo approach. Being forced to sit through the host's personal picks is made all the more frustrating because *F.E.A.R.*'s lack of voice support means that the host can't even be told that his opponents are fed up with the current map or game mode.

The best thing about *F.E.A.R.* is its formidable arsenal. Laying waste to opponents with flesh-frying laser beams never gets old. Unfortunately the lag does. Don't expect anything like *Resistance*'s butter smooth online play here. **NP**

★★



Splinter Cell Double Agent

Not half bad

■ Developer: UBISOFT ■ Publisher: UBISOFT ■ Out: NOW ■ Players: 1-6

Fans of Tom Clancy's latest *Splinter Cell* will be well pleased when taking their mad spy-skills into the online arena. Not only does it run smoother than a lubricated pair of rollerblades but there's also a great number of games to dip in and out of.

The first thing you'll notice after logging on is the impressive array of online support. As well as the typical Quick and Custom options there's a very handy co-op mode, a wealth of news bulletins and even videos detailing how each of the various game modes work.

By far the best way to play *Double Agent* is Spies vs Mercs. This game mode sees three spies slipping into Sam Fisher's familiar gear as they attempt to steal sensitive files from a number of

computer terminals. Another few players assume the roles of well-armed mercenaries guarding the terminals. Because the spies are totally outgunned by the mercs they need to hide in shadows, crawl through ventilation shafts and perform sneaky kills, like the outrageously cool 'hang outside a window and drag the merc to his death as he peeks out to investigate' move. The thoroughly different skills of the spies and mercs lead to some great games of cat and mouse.

Our experience with *Double Agent* online was generally fantastic, with only a few instances of teammate betrayals proving an annoyance. **NP**

★★★

GAMER OF THE MONTH



Want to be simultaneously loved, worshipped and adored by your peers? Well now you can! We are planning to immortalise one lucky PS3 gamer from Australia or New Zealand on this page each month.

Want to be the OPS Gamer of the Month? Tell us why at ops@derwenthoward.com.au or meet us online. Only the bestest and most awesomest may apply. Online glory awaits those up to the challenge.



OPS READER SECTION

Online gaming on the PS3 is rolling along nicely now, even if *Resistance* and *MotorStorm* are crushing everything before them as the clear multiplayer games of choice. Online gaming isn't just about shooting and out-racing unknown opponents, although that can be great fun. It's also about meeting up with fellow PS3 fans... and then shooting the crap out of them. With that in mind we've provided details of a few of the OPS readers' online names and which game they like to play most. Say hi and challenge them to a game. Remember that online names are not case sensitive. If you'd like to share your online name with fellow readers email us at ops@derwenthoward.com.au with 'Online Challenge' as the subject heading and tell us your name and which game you want to play. Check out the monthly OPS vs. readers online night details also (bottom right corner of the page). Don't forget the OPS team's online names are printed on page 8 so feel free to add us and throw down a challenge.

Assasin_Killer – Resistance
Blackadder_05 – Resistance
bounti – MotorStorm
Doxsic – MotorStorm
Cam4v – Resistance
Cosgrove – Resistance
EBK – MotorStorm
Jase619 – Resistance
Malifican – MotorStorm
MrTerminator – Resistance
Phoenixavenger – Resistance
PSIress – Resistance
Shags666 – Resistance
sir_gazman – Resistance
Stinkfire – Resistance
SuperSmashBros – Resistance
turbo180 – Resistance
Vauto – Resistance



Resistance - Multiplayer

OPS' official guide to online etiquette and such

Readers, no doubt those of you with a PS3 and a copy of the mighty Res have supped at the cup of online goodness. It's the best online, next gen experience available at the moment. Now, we've previously mentioned this – but we can't state it enough – we're going worldwide soon as the server will link us all up – remember: think locally, kill globally. Thus it's up to OPS to provide Aussie battlers with some tips, dos and don'ts and other advice for the coming storm.

Deathmatch

As much as we love Resistance, it's not a tactical shooter. It's a run-and-gun game much in the spirit of TimeSplitters. So don't treat it like a tactical shooter. The sniper rifle is a glorious instrument in the single player game, but in a deathmatch it should be ignored. Or even taken out of the equation altogether.

Why?

There's always some smartarse who snipes because they're too much of a girl to get into the thick of it. If we see too much of this snipey crap we'll be forced to name and shame the culprits. And then everyone who reads the mag will be on you like panties aren't on Lindsay Lohan. Harsh but fair, we reckon.

Team Games

All right, since last time we chatted people seem to have gotten the hang of Team Games. Nice. Nothing like a good Team Deathmatch. However when you're spawning, check to see what species you are. If you're Chimera, and you see another Chimera, don't shoot them.

See, that's why it's called a team game. They even give you colours (blue and orange) and different abilities. The odd stray round when your Chimera's in rage mode (and everyone looks purple) is forgivable. But seriously – eyes open, gang. Stoxy242 has copped more 'friendly fire' than a pyromaniac's birthday beano.

Novelty Games

ARGH! Look, we don't want to tell you what to do – it's your PS3, it's your freedom, but if you've managed to set up a one shot kill game, or a level where you can only use melee attacks – please, for the love of little baby Jesus – name your game thusly. Don't call it 'Elite kill kill death burns' call it 'one hit kills' or 'NO one hit kills'. That way people won't be dropping in and out of your game like it's a pub with no beer.

If grenade only matches float your boat, well, we won't judge you. But please let us know so we can ignore your game like a plague monkey.

Level Selection

There are some awesome levels in Resistance, really cool ones. But if you've got three mates you might want to NOT pick Manchester, say. The Bus Yard is a much better choice. Of course the Rooftops are always a nice size when your players exceed eight or so – but take some time to look at the levels. It seems like work at first, but it will pay off. There's a reason the game has limits on players. Would you bung 40 people in a phone booth? Of course not.

In the same way you'd try to avoid two dudes on the aircraft carrier. Which brings us to...



OPS' Official Resistance Match of the Month

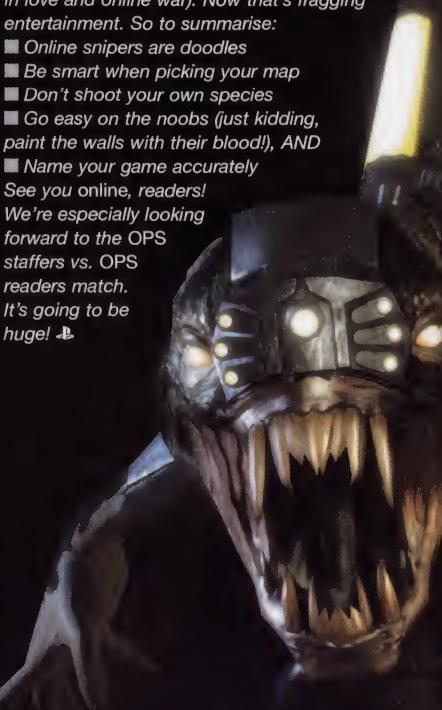
Yep, it's coming. On the last Wednesday of the month (the first kick off being 8pm Wed 25th July) Official Playstation Magazine will be unleashing a variety of games. But we're not fascists – what do you guys like? We tend to lean towards Deathmatch or Team Deathmatch (hey, we're simple men and women here) but if Assault or Capture the Flag is your bag let us know.

To join on the night simply look for games being hosted by the OPS staff (our online names are on page 8). Rewards for players who excel will be upcoming. See how many times you can kill the editor, for instance (sorry, The_Duude, all's fair in love and online war). Now that's fraggling entertainment. So to summarise:

- Online snipers are doodles
- Be smart when picking your map
- Don't shoot your own species
- Go easy on the noobs (just kidding, paint the walls with their blood!), AND
- Name your game accurately

See you online, readers!

We're especially looking forward to the OPS staffers vs. OPS readers match. It's going to be huge! ♦



THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS



WELCOME

Wow, I know the middle of the year is a quiet time for games but this is ridiculous. The office is so quiet I can hear Naz's squeaking chair as he literally rocks along to his GTA: Vice City CDs. It's like sitting next to a bunch of randy chipmunks on speed. Aarrgggh! Thank god I'm hopping a plane to New York tomorrow. For the first time in my life I'm actually looking forward to 20 hours of non-stop jet engine noise.

LUKE REILLY
Reviews Editor

REVIEW RATINGS

Here's what our review scores stand for:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 9/10** A truly astonishing game. Essential fare
- 8/10** Highly recommended
- 7/10** Good, solid fare that's well worth a look
- 6/10** Better than average, and acceptable for hardcore fans of the genre
- 5/10** An average game, probably not a lot to recommend here
- 4/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 3/10** Extremely disappointing
- 2/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer coaster

THE OPS AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!

The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

"Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer is indeed fantastic fun for much of its playtime", page 86

PlayStation
Official Magazine Australia

**GAME
OF THE
MONTH**



FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER

Freakin' fantastic four-player family fun! - page 86



AFL PREMIERSHIP 2007

Can this year's update kick a goal? - page 90

■ Shadow Hearts: From the New World	p.91
■ Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner	p.92
■ King of Fighters Maximum Impact 2	p.92
■ Buzz!: The Mega Quiz	p.93

PSP



DINER DASH

Worth making a mad dash for? - page 94

■ Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	p.94
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■ GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS
■ DISTRIBUTOR: 2K GAMES

■ PLAYERS: 1-4
■ PRICE: \$99.95
■ HD: 720p
■ WEB: www.2kgames.com/

■ BACK STORY: The Fantastic Four have not been treated well. Movies and games have missed the magic that made the comic so enjoyable. With this latest movie sequel and game will we finally get a title that lives up to the moniker 'Fantastic'?

FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER

Perhaps they should be renamed the 'Very-good-while-they-last... Four'

Remember when you were a kid, and they had those shonky little rides out the front of supermarkets? (If you answered "no", just go with us here.) Be they fire trucks or space ships – you'd load in your coin and the 'ride' would gyrate around for a little while.

And despite the fact it was, let's face it, kind of lame – you enjoyed yourself. Perhaps uttering a giggle of glee or two. And then, like most good things, it was over all too quickly.

THAT'S DEEP MAN...

That's how we feel about *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*. Not having seen the film at the time of print, and not particularly liking the first one, we were not exactly going berko with excitement at the idea of this title. But then we got it and blow us down with a feather – it was really cool!

IT'S REVIEWIN' TIME!

The game mechanic is the real winner. Like *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*, four players are on screen at once. Unlike *MUA*, *Fantastic Four* has the same four throughout the whole game: Mr. Fantastic, The Thing, The Human Torch

and The Invisible Woman. In fact these four also featured in *MUA* but their powers are superior in this iteration.

The plot is a direct rip from the movie (we think). The Silver Surfer comes to prepare Earth for something big and planet consuming (Galactus for fellow comic book nerds), Dr. Doom pokes his metallic bonce into the mix and chaos ensues. Like most comic book/movie/game conversions (*Spider-Man 3* for instance) the movie's villains aren't going to be enough to fill a whole game so we get comic book favourites the alien Skrull, the Russian Red Ghost and a few others.

Control-wise things couldn't be simpler. The face buttons give you a quick attack, a strong attack, jump and pick up/action button. The latter is especially useful for Thing as he can pretty much pick up any piece of the background and use it as a weapon. Reed Richards looks great pummelling enemies so hard that his rubbery body spins all the way around and his massive, elongated arms pinwheel around his spindly frame. Sue Storm – who usually gets erm, shafted power-wise in these games is actually quite a formidable melee fighter and Johnny

Storm flames on in a very attractive and explosive fashion.

TELL US OF THE POWERS!

This is where the game really shines – albeit briefly. Press **B** and a list of personal powers will come up. Reed can frog leap great distances, grow really tall and smack the crap out of big bosses or flying foes. He can also throw plasma grenades and slingshot himself into the bodies of his foes. Sue can become invisible, create massive forcefields, make stuff levitate and move it about – especially baddies off cliffs. We defy you not to chuckle like an evil mastermind when you do that and hear their dying screams. Johnny flames on just by holding down **B**, which is a good thing as many of the game's massive environments are quite dark. He can also fly, shoot fireballs and light stuff up with plumes of flame. And The Thing? Well he clobbers stuff. Be it enemies, the ground, walls, your mum – whatever. Handily, you can switch to any of these players by using the D-pad. It's fun alone but it really shines with a few mates. Yes, you do lose a bit of graphical flair – but the sheer joy of seeing all four of you



■ The Thing's always looking to get his rocks off



■ His favourite drink? Molotov Cocktails



■ "Okay everyone, imagine you're Rosie O'Donnell and put your hands on your hips"





■ Why don't metallic killing machines ever have hair?



■ "Jessica, I've been thinking about getting Implants for you. How big would you like them?"



LET'S STOP ALL THIS CON-FUSION

Fusion attacks are when two members of the Four use their powers to kill evil doers. Check out this tasty move by the brother/sister team of Storm. She provides the big forcefield bubble and he fills it with fire. Mmmmm Jessica Alba. We wouldn't mind doing a few fusion attacks with her, if you know what we mean. Eh? Eh? Oh bugger off then.





If she wasn't invisible this would be the greatest camera angle ever



creating chaos, smashing the ground and flinging henchmen to their deaths... well, it's strangely Zen.

WHAT ELSE YA GOT?

This game obviously wants to make it clear that the Four are a team – and not just a bunch of disparate superheroes. It does this in a few ways. The first is the most simple – you can upgrade the characters' stats and moves. You should do this pretty equally because when one of the Four goes down you have to wait a spell for them to come back up. If all Four go down at the same time – game over. So it's a good idea not to have any weak links in the chain. The second way's the most fun. Press **□** and a bunch of team combos come up. Sue can create a huge forcefield, Johnny can fill it with fire and Sue can shoot it at a band of Skrull, say. Or Reed can really stretch himself around one of Sue's forcefields and make the ground shake. Johnny can join up with Thing to create earth smashing, fiery destruction and... well, you get the idea. The only downside to these attacks is they take up a lot of "cosmic power" (magic, basically) and the game takes just a

little too long to fill up that gauge. Also it would have been really cool to include a four-way, team attack.

The third way FF makes sure you know this is a team game is by giving you puzzles only certain members of the crew can get through. Not only that but each player gets a level all by themselves (Johnny actually gets a few). Johnny chasing the Silver Surfer through tunnels in New York, Reed turning off security, The Thing smashing his way through big, rocky beasts and Sue using all her powers to disable a military base.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, MONKEY BOY?

It all looks so good on paper, and in fact – it is good, this is a fine superhero game... until it stops at level six. Six levels, readers, in this day and age! Sure they're divided up, but seriously

– six? *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* almost wore out its welcome with the number of levels it had. Certainly *Fantastic Four*'s level design is bigger and more impressive but still... just like that kid on the twenty cent space ship ride, it'll all be over before you know it. A sudden "Oh shit, this is the last boss!" will hit you and that's all she wrote. Sure, there are some unlockable costumes, cut-scenes and artwork – but none of that is going to make the game any longer.

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer is indeed fantastic fun for much of its playtime (it was shaping up to be an '8' before the game's conclusion arrived a few levels early). A meagre six levels, and quite an easy difficulty level, means you'll be there for a fun time, not a Fantastic time. Still, if you can rope in three mates there's fun to be had. Just not enough of it. **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:

- It's the best FF game around
- Fantastic four-player co-op
- It's shorter than a midget
- You're "so over" superheroes

CONS:

VERDICT: Slick, good-looking and above all fun. If only it was about eight times bigger!

OFFICIAL SCORE:
07

INFO BYTE

Check out this tasty snap of Johnny (The Human Torch) Storm using the SIXAXIS to fang around the sewers. Good times – and you'll get to do this more than once.



■ Turns out Clobberin' Time's not for another half-hour



TAME YOUR FEROClOUS HUNGER



GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DEVELOPER: IR GURUS
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$79.95
HD: 576i
WEB: www.irgurus.com

BACK STORY: Melbourne-based IR Gurus takes football very seriously, kick-starting its love of the game with AFL Coach 2002 for the PC. It also brought us the high-octane *Heatskeer* and, uh, *The Saddle Club – Willowbrook Stables*.

AFL PREMIERSHIP 2007

Caaaarn The Saints!

It's been less than a year since *AFL Premiership 2006* kicked a winner through the middle posts, improving in leaps and bounds upon a series that had yet to find its feet on the field. The Aussie-based footy fanatics at IR Gurus have been quick to rush out another Sherrin-thumping instalment for this year, which leaves us more than a little dubious as to how much they could have possibly done in such a short space of time.

The answer is very little. If you've had a bash at *AFL Premiership 2006*, you'll be unusually comfortable here, and not in a good way. That's because 2007 looks, feels, and plays exactly like 2006 – worst of all, your tight-shorted sportsmen still move like narcoleptic slugs. The notoriously half-arsed visuals and jerky player animations haven't been improved – carrying on a tense

battle in front of a crowd of globulous pixels and disembodied pom-poms is a major atmosphere-killer. Also, the patchy commentary is looser than a taxi company's automated telephone service.

"Press... One... For... Haw-thorn... Press... Two... For..."

To be fair, what improvements have been made punt the series that little bit closer to serious simulation territory. A new training option in the expansive Career Mode offers up a variety of gruelling regimens to inflict upon your squad. Taking individual players through their paces has the potential to increase their on-field skills and/or injure them to buggery depending on your knack for digital coaching. Unfortunately it's all done automatically, with only the parameters and intensity of the training left up to you. Still, it makes for a more involving

experience and hey, who hasn't wanted to give Ben Cousins a kick up the arse lately? That's right, footy boffins – every player, team and ground is officially licensed, replete with each club's dorky theme song and, in a curiously cool new addition, multiple guernseys to kit your players up in.

Various tweaks to the gameplay are subtle but do make for a better experience than before. When you take a mark, the camera now automatically switches to a downfield view so you can check out who's open. If you're in possession and streaking across the field, you now have the option of side-stepping or spinning to avoid incoming tackles rather than just taking it like a man. However, those still booting goals on *AFL Premiership 2006* shouldn't be at all worried that they're missing out. **Toby McCasker**

GET YOUR KICKS

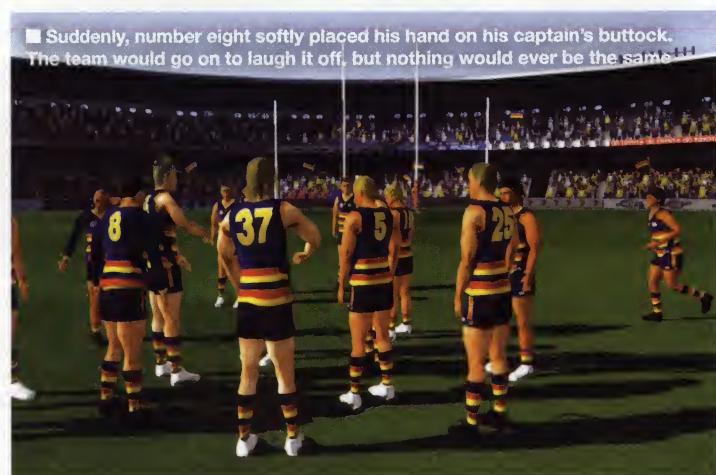
For those who don't know when enough is enough, playing on easy now makes it impossible to overpower a kick and send it dribbling into the hands of a gleeful full-forward.



"Sherrin balls? I'm not sherrin my balls with any of you blokes!"



■ Scoring in front of 80,000 people. Way less awkward when you're talking about sport



■ Suddenly, number eight softly placed his hand on his captain's buttock. The team would go on to laugh it off, but nothing would ever be the same...!!!

PROS:

- Cool new offensive options
- New training aspect is a win
- Still looks like soggy arse
- Sketchy commentary

CONS:

VERDICT: Some promising in-roads, but ultimately a miss if you've already got last year's game.

**OFFICIAL SCORE:
06**



■ Aussie Rules: Six points for getting it right, one for "getting close enough"

■ GENRE: RPG
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: NAUTILUS
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT

■ PLAYERS: 1
■ PRICE: \$79.95
■ RESOLUTION: 576i
■ WEB: www.ghostlight.uk.com

■ BACK STORY: The series originally debuted with Koudelka in 2000 on the PSOne, a macabre 4-disc tale that would go on to garner a fervent cult following with the subsequent PS2 follow-ups *Shadow Hearts* and *Shadow Hearts: Covenant*.

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



■ The Domino's guys really have to hustle to make the 30 minute guarantee when Santa orders home delivery



■ "Shadow Hearts? That's it I'm firing my agent!"



■ If you think this is weird, check out the cat



SHADOW HEARTS: FROM THE NEW WORLD

That giant cat knows kung-fu

Along, long time ago, as the PS2 hoovered itself into the homes of gleeful gamers everywhere, a little-known RPG by the name of *Shadow Hearts* quietly crept in under the door, flogging a unique gothic tale and a turn-based battle system with a difference. It was ignored in favour of Square-Enix's latest baby, but not without turning a few heads on its way out. Flick to right now and not only has the immense playability and deeply affecting storytelling of the series been recognised by more than a handful of picky, cellar-dwelling RPGers, the third instalment in the franchise has finally arrived on our shores over a year since its US release (and over two since Japanese gamers got a hold of it).

Perhaps closer to a spin-off than a true sequel, *SH: FTNW* sees you taking the role of teenage private detective Johnny Garland during the American Depression. Naturally, it's not long before he's neck-deep in a case of the supernatural and in the company

of scantily-clad, shape-shifting Native American hotski Shania. A cadre of inventive characters hook up with them along the way (including an El Mariachi-style gunslinger and a gothic-lolita vampiress whose weight fluctuates with her attacks), and although the comparatively colourful North American setting takes it a further step away from the original's spooky roots, there's enough evil afoot in New York to keep the hairs on the back of everyone's necks rigid.

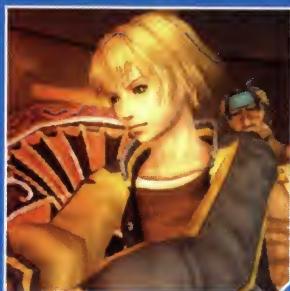
The excellent 'Judgement Ring' doo-hickey that was a major factor in establishing the series is back and just as effective in reeling you in. In theory, having to hit several coloured sections in a circle as a revolving needle swings around it every time you want to attack, crack off some magic or use an item sounds like an absolute bore, but in practise it keeps things lively and engrossing. Turn-based random battles there may be (although they're well dispersed and not nearly as irritating as this archaic way of doing

things can be), but just sitting back and taking it easy isn't an option. To make encounters even more interesting, the introduction of the 'Stock' bar changes everything. Executing combos with your pals and taking two actions in one turn requires a bar of 'stock', and you build this up by making standard attacks and receiving damage. The same rules apply to enemies too, making for challenging and genuinely gripping battles.

If you've missed out on the *Shadow Hearts* efforts thus far, this isn't a good starting point. Bare in mind that *SH: FTNW* is now two years old, and it shows (especially graphically) – newcomers would be better off hunting down the previous two games to see what all the fuss is about. **Toby McCasker**

TIDUS THE SECOND?

Unfortunately, breaking-voiced Johnny Garland is in no way as compelling a protagonist as the marvellously angst-ridden Yuri (the trench-coated anti-hero of *Shadow Hearts* and *Covenant*) was, and since he's carrying this thing, you're going to be spending a lot of time with him. Around 30 hours to be exact, which might be a little much even for the most die-hard *Shadow Hearts* fans who will no doubt start clamouring for the cast of old.



INFO BYTE

The original *Shadow Hearts* is a hugely sought-after rarity that fetches upwards of \$100 on eBay. It's no *Suikoden*, but it's certainly no generic wrestling title, either. A must for any RPG fanatic – get bidding.



■ The best recreation of New York this side of GTAIV, True Crime: New York City, Spider-Man 3, Driver: Parallel Lines...

PROS:

- Excellent combat system
- Riveting storyline

CONS:

- Dated graphics
- Drastic departure for series

VERDICT: For *Shadow Hearts* devotees only, and even they'll be a little disappointed.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
06

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: RPG
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: ATLAS
■ DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

■ PLAYERS: 1
■ PRICE: TBC
■ RESOLUTION: 576i
■ WEB: www.atlus.com



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SUMMONER: RAIDOU KUZUNOHA VS. THE SOULLESS ARMY

We're sorry, what?

The longest title in RPGs makes asking for it at your local EB an awkward moment, but if you're one for a grand tale of supernatural forces you'd do well to pronounce it in full to the bewildered guy at the counter.

Devil Summoner is steeped in a conventional RPG ethos but coyly implements unorthodox features of its own, which parallels rather eerily with the game's 18th century Japan setting. You play as Raidou Kuzunoha, a 'devil summoner' who is entrusted with the defence of humanity against the looming threat of demonic invasion.

It's immediately interesting to note that Raidou is a silent protagonist, in much

the same vein as *Chrono Trigger*'s Crono. Even though there are no voice-overs, during the text conversations and cut-scenes Raidou never says a word. If that wasn't enough of a throwback to the days of RPG yore for you, consider the fact that every background is pre-rendered and character models are plagued by 'jaggies' and a lack of detail.

Regardless of this unpolished presentation, fans of the weird and wonderful will have field day. Combat is real-time, and while a little sluggish it's great fun due to the very personable nature of all the cheeky critters. RPG aficionados who weren't raised on the Hollywood pizzazz of *Final Fantasy XII* will love it. **Toby McCasker**

PROS:
■ Well-spun, riveting storyline
■ Ace real-time combat

CONS:
■ Looks like yesteryear
■ Random battles grate

VERDICT: One for RPG fans itching to get stuck into something compelling.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
07



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: FIGHTING
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: SNK PLAYMORE
■ DISTRIBUTOR: QV SOFTWARE

■ PLAYERS: 1-2
■ PRICE: \$69.95
■ HD: 576i
■ WEB: www.snkplaymoreusa.com



KING OF FIGHTERS MAXIMUM IMPACT 2

Into another dimension...

Ever since Sega first cranked the fighting genre up a dimension with *Virtua Fighter*, the gaming world has been divided into two strict camps: the 2D purist grandads, and the 3D funksters, with their 'hippy hop' music, baggy jeans, and furious 'tudes. "Damn those pesky kids, with their button bashing game mechanics" claimed the oldies, as 'da kidz' bemoaned the fact that the 2D crowd refused to move with the times. Can't we all just get along?

King of the Fighters Maximum Impact 2 thinks so, and takes a different direction, attempting to drag these two camps together for a big inter-dimensional hug, with a game that plays like a 2D fighter, with all the graphic goodness of

3D. Sadly, like all group hugs, it ultimately feels hollow, awkward, and more than a little uncomfortable.

Maximum Impact's main problem is that it takes the worst aspects from both types and squeezes them into a generic axis of boredom. Imagine the sluggish, button bashing mechanics of any no-name turgid 3D fighter combined with the rigidity of the 2D format and you have the

latest instalment of *King of Fighters*.

Sure it does pretty much everything you expect from such a game – combos, special attacks, finishing moves – but it refuses steadfast to innovate in any notable direction, and renders itself useless as a result. *King of Fighters* doesn't necessarily do anything badly, but it doesn't do anything well either. In short: better left alone. **Mark Serrels**

PROS:
■ Not necessarily bad
■ Loads of playable characters

CONS:
■ Poor 2D/3D mishmash
■ Yawn... so boring

VERDICT: The one guaranteed cure for insomnia...

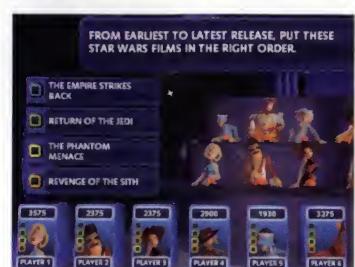
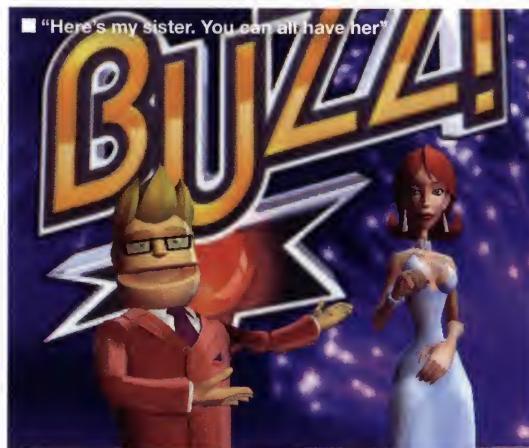
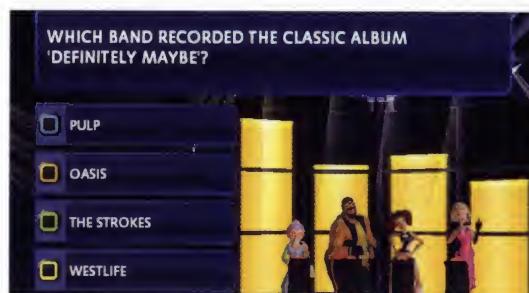
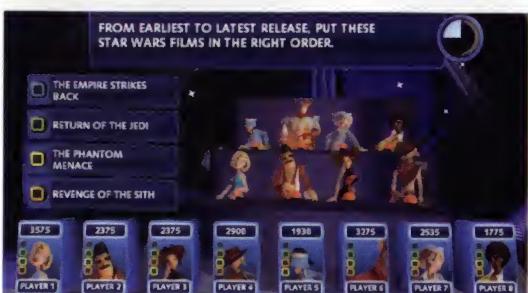
OFFICIAL SCORE:
05

■ GENRE: PARTY GAME
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: RELENTLESS SOFTWARE
■ DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

■ PLAYERS: 1-8
■ PRICE: \$59.95
■ RESOLUTION: 576i
■ WEB: www.buzzthegame.com/

■ BACK STORY: The Buzz is back with yet another entry. One has to ask, what with *Buzz! The Music Quiz*, *Buzz! The BIG Quiz*, *Buzz! The Sports Quiz* and *Buzz! Junior Jungle Party* hovering out there in game land... do we really need more buzzing?

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW



BUZZ!: THE MEGA QUIZ

It's time to get a buzz on with Jason Donovan!

Buzz!: The Mega Quiz is the latest incarnation in Sony's game-show-at-home series. The cute gimmick of giving players actual buzzers, with an option of having up to eight players, if you have enough buzzers and people, has made the series a favourite among a wide variety of gamers from both hardcore and casual camps.

This latest incarnation isn't going to make your pants explode with delight, but it's a solid entry and arguably the best Buzz yet.

Having a gander at the screenshots you'll see not a lot has changed in the presentation. Sure it's slicker, with more animations, but the whole wacky, cartoony vibe remains and, yep, the Jason Donovan-voiced host makes a return, so it's hardly a reinvention.

So what is new in this Mega quiz?

Size, for a start. This time around the game chimes in with over 5000 questions, 100 celebrity shots, 50 film clips, 20 sporting clips, about a dozen movie clips and TV footage.

This is a far more kinetic and active experience than we've had with, say, *Buzz!: The BIG Quiz* and it's quite a welcome one. It'll probably be a while before you find yourself hearing or seeing the same questions and really, for a quiz game, that's your meat, veggies and potatoes right there.

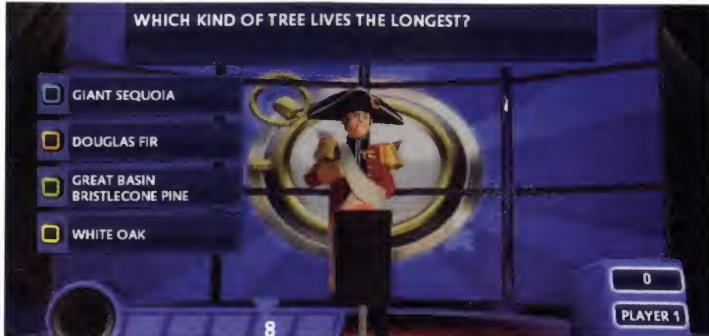
Another tasty addition to the mix is more game modes. Sure, we were happy with the ones we had like Pass the Bomb – where you passed the bomb as the fuse steadily burned – with a correct answer, but held onto it with a wrong one: leading to snakey moves where you answer the question just before the thing

explodes, literally passing your opponent a handful of death.

With *Buzz!: The Mega Quiz* we now have new modes like Point Picker – which allows you to pick subjects that suit you and/or downright piss off the other players. Winner Stays On, which has you picking older or younger, higher or lower to maximise your points and the final round, which has been made even more hectic than ever before with you gaining and losing time depending on how you answer.

Basically *Buzz!: The Mega Quiz* is a solid 'party game'. Good to break the ice at gatherings or for making your mates feel like dull-witted mules. If you own one or more of the other Buzz entries you could probably take or leave this one – but if you haven't had the Buzz experience yet this is the one to get.

It'll be interesting to see if Buzz goes next gen and has a PS3 version with downloadable content (note to Sony: you should do this) but as it stands this is the best game show you're going to have in your loungeroom. Unless they bring back Burgo's Catch Phrase. God how we miss that show. **Anthony O'Connor**



PROS:
■ Best quiz game around
■ Provides a good time

CONS:
■ You have no friends...
■ Apart from imaginary ones

VERDICT: Perfect with beer, mates and an unhealthy desire to be a big smarty pants.

C-C-C-CHANGES

Okay, so, as you can see, the graphics have been given a slight polish rather than a complete overhaul. Still the changes that count are in the game itself, with new modes and an awesome final round that can get really crazy. Especially with a few glasses of Jesus Juice. Just a suggestion, mind you.

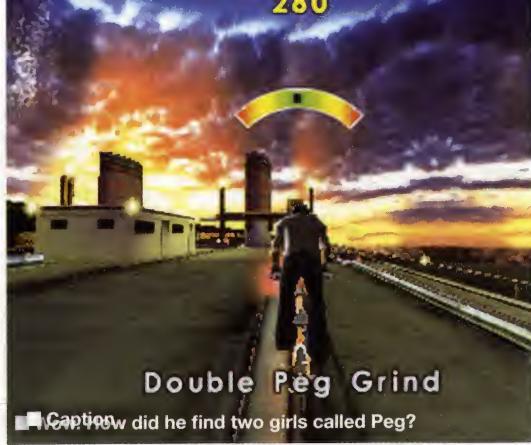


OFFICIAL SCORE:
07

PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: SPORTS
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: LEFT FIELD
■ DISTRIBUTOR: RED ANT

■ PLAYERS: 1-4 (WI-FI)
■ PRICE: \$69.95
■ HD: NO
■ WEB: www.cravegames.com



■ Caption: How did he find two girls called Peg?

DAVE MIRRA BMX CHALLENGE

Mirra, Mirra on the wall...

Dave Mirra is one of the most dominant extreme athletes. He holds the record for most X-Games medals and has won a medal in every X-Games since 1997. Left Field will tell you that Mirra is to BMX what the Wright Brothers were to flight – although we reckon he's more like Chuck Yeager. He didn't invent it, but he rewrote the rules. Unfortunately, *Dave Mirra BMX Challenge* doesn't rewrite anything.

A bog-standard exercise in budget game design, *BMX Challenge* is easily the worst of a series that got off to a promising start back on PSOne but was driven into the dirt by Acclaim. Shoddy and unclear level design, lacklustre visuals

and poor controls are just the beginning.

Good extreme sports titles are designed to cater for massive trick lines and insane combos. *BMX Challenge* isn't a good extreme sports title and, as such, does no such thing. Many of the grindable rails and ledges lead straight into walls (or the ocean), and few of them are close enough together to build any sort of

combo. Worse still, hosts of objects that look like you ought to be able to grind are simply window dressing. It also doesn't help that the default controls require three thumbs to pull off a basic trick.

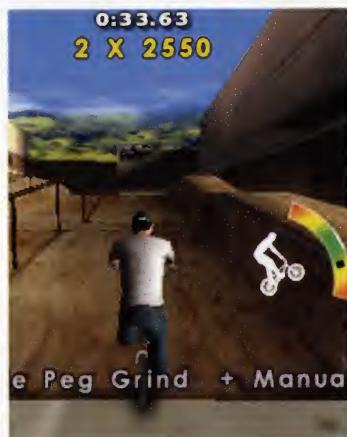
Dave Mirra resorted to legal action to remove his name from 2002's woeful *BMX XXX*. He should have spoke to his lawyer about this one too... **Luke Reilly**

PROS:
■ You're buying a gift for someone you don't really like

CONS:
■ Rubbish level design
■ Rubbish controls

VERDICT: Lacking in every department, it's one of the worst Tony Hawk's clones in years.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
03



PS3 PS2 PSP REVIEW

■ GENRE: PUZZLE
■ RELEASE: NOW
■ DEVELOPER: CLIMAX
■ DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

■ PLAYERS: 1-2 (WI-FI)
■ PRICE: \$69.95
■ HD: NO
■ WEB: dinerdashhandheld.com



■ "Hey look, there's Sharlene from yesterday's Similarly Dressed Same Sex Couples Picnic"

DINER DASH

Chef's special or absolute balderdash?

Developers must love the puzzle genre. Like the movie industry's arthouse flicks, it's the one area of videogames where concepts that would normally be laughed out the door, actually have a shot at being made. Climax's pitch about wannabe restauranteur Flo and her ambition to own a chain of diners might sound as dreary as a *Desperate Housewives* plotline but it was clearly convincing enough to score the cash for its development. Although it's hardly surprising when you consider that the development cost of *Diner Dash*'s single-screen 2D visuals would be a minuscule fraction of most PSP releases.

Diner Dash sees you seating

customers, taking orders, delivering meals and clearing dishes in a mad rush as you serve the lunch hour crowd. Rather than controlling Flo's movement directly you select tables and counters for Flo to sprint to. While this does remove some of the hassle of navigating tightly packed tables, tapping the D-pad multiple times to cycle through tables is far from ideal.

It's possible to get into an enjoyable groove with *Diner Dash* as you juggle plates and orders but ultimately the action comes off as undercooked. The game gets too bogged down in table service rather than exploring more interesting ideas like unhappy customers needing to be tackled as they try to do a runner. **Narayan Pattison**

PROS:
■ The best waitress sim yet
■ Mildly addictive

CONS:
■ Far too monotonous
■ Looks like free Flash game

VERDICT: All the excitement of waiting on tables, without any of the tips.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
05





FILM

The *Shaun of the Dead* boys heat up *Hot Fuzz*, Nic Cage is on fire in *Ghost Rider*, Sly punches on in *Rocky Balboa*, stars flock to *The Good Shepherd*, John McClane lives in *Die Hard 4.0* and more



DVD OF THE MONTH

HOT FUZZ (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Jim Broadbent, Timothy Dalton, Bill Nighy
 ■ **DIRECTOR:** Edgar Wright

From the creators of *Shaun of the Dead*, *Hot Fuzz* is a riotously fun action-comedy that smacks of just about every buddy-cop film ever made. Top London police constable Nicholas Angel (Simon Pegg) is so good at his job he's making everyone else look bad. To combat this, his superiors ship him off to the sleepy village of Sandford. Partnered with the inept but well-meaning Danny Butterman (Nick Frost), Angel struggles to adapt to overseeing village fetes instead of drug busts, until a series of gruesome 'accidents' has him convinced all is not well in this seemingly sweet town.

The best thing about *Hot Fuzz* is that it doesn't treat its audience with the kind of contempt that depressingly bad spoofs from the US do. It's silly yet smart, and over-the-top without being absurd. It may be an homage to the buddy-cop genre, but that doesn't mean it's not a near-flawless standalone film in its own right.

The DVD also comes with a colossal haul of extra features including four commentaries, outtakes, a feature length trivia track, deleted scenes and a giant stack of featurettes.

VERDICT: You'll never be able to watch *Bad Boys* again without bursting into laughter (if you don't already). Pitch perfect comedy – sharply written and intelligently directed.
 This shit just got real.

★★★



WHAT'S THE FUZZ ABOUT?

Hot Fuzz vs. The Good, The Bad & The Ugly



Hot Fuzz vs. Die Hard with a Vengeance



Hot Fuzz vs. Bad Boys II



Hot Fuzz vs. Starsky & Hutch



Hot Fuzz vs. Commando



Hot Fuzz vs. Bad Boys II



Hot Fuzz vs. Ronin



Hot Fuzz vs. Point Break



Hot Fuzz vs. Lethal Weapon



HORROR**THE HOST** (M)

STARRING: Kang-ho Song, Hie-bong Byeon, Hae-il Park, Du-na Bae, Ah-sung Ko
DIRECTOR: Joon-ho Bong



When the US military dumps toxic chemicals in the Han River, running through the heart of Seoul, a mutant killing-machine is conceived beneath the surface. Without warning, the creature begins to cut a swathe of destruction along the riverside and Gang-du, a restaurateur on the riverbank, sees his only daughter snatched by the creature. Determined to rescue their girl, Gang-du and his family sneak past the military and are thrust into a battle with the monster. It's a simple creature feature on the outside but *The Host* is far more intelligent than the genre it resides in.

VERDICT: A quirky, everyday family versus hideous beast – it's as terrifying as it is funny. Korea's answer to *Jaws*.

**LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA** (MA15+)

STARRING: Ken Watanabe, Kazunari Ninomiya, Tsuyoshi Ihara
DIRECTOR: Clint Eastwood

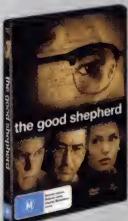


From Academy Award winner Clint Eastwood, *Letters from Iwo Jima* is the equally amazing companion piece to *Flags of Our Fathers*. *Letters from Iwo Jima* is the untold story of the Japanese soldiers who defended the island of Iwo Jima against the US marines. Between the two films, they tell the full story – not just one side. The haunting film gives faces to the Japanese soldiers who went to Iwo Jima knowing they wouldn't come back – among them Saigo, a baker who wants to live to see his newborn daughter and Baron Nishi, an Olympic champion famous for his skill.

VERDICT: Eastwood erases any hard feelings about old enemies with this profound, powerful and thoughtful film.

**DRAMA****THE GOOD SHEPHERD** (M)

STARRING: Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie, Robert De Niro, Alec Baldwin
DIRECTOR: Robert De Niro



From the Oscar-winning writer of *Forrest Gump*, Eric Roth, *The Good Shepherd* is an epic (albeit fictional) account of the birth of the CIA. Matt Damon is Edward Wilson, a reserved young man who graduates from Yale in the late 1930s and is recruited by the government to assist them on a number of covert operations. A thinking man's spy flick, it's a bit of a plodding piece and a little disappointing considering the star power involved. Damon's own *Jason Bourne* flicks and Tony Scott's *Spy Game* are far better cloak-and-dagger movies.

VERDICT: De Niro's direction is very stylish, but the all-star cast phone in their performances and the running time is exceedingly lengthy.

**ACTION****HOST RIDER** (M)

STARRING: Nicolas Cage, Eva Mendes, Peter Fonda, Sam Elliott
DIRECTOR: Mark Steven Johnson



When motorcyclist extraordinaire Johnny Blaze finds out his father has terminal cancer, he strikes up a pact with Mephistopheles, giving his soul for the health of his old man. Unfortunately,

Johnny is deceived and his dad dies in a motorcycle accident. Years later Johnny Blaze is a famous stunt rider when Mephistopheles proposes to Johnny he'll release his contract if he becomes the Ghost Rider and defeats his evil son Blackheart, who wants hell on earth. Delivers nothing you wouldn't expect from a movie about a dude with a flaming skull for a head, *Ghost Rider* is nonetheless proof that Marvel is running low on fresh movie fodder.

VERDICT: It's better than *Catwoman*. And *Spawn*. And maybe *Daredevil*.

**BULLITT** (M)

DIRECTOR: Peter Yates
STARRING: Steve McQueen



Bullitt – the cop movie against which many since have been judged and the proud owner of THAT car chase, revered worldwide as the greatest ever committed to film. The print has been cleaned up quite remarkably, with only the expected hint of grain present. The Blu-ray disc is also packed with a few docos to make it worth your while.

VERDICT: An oldie but a goodie. This is the best that *Bullitt* has ever looked (and likely ever will) but the audio is a bit weak.

**OPEN SEASON** (G)

DIRECTOR: Roger Allers
STARRING: Martin Lawrence, Gary Sinise



Unlike the disappointing *Happy Feet* and *Ice Age 2*, *Open Season* is a great showcase for the amazing resolution of Blu-ray but the painfully predictable script soon grates.

VERDICT: The stunning visuals wear off quickly. Wait for *The Incredibles*.

**NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM** (PG)

DIRECTOR: Shawn Levy
STARRING: Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson



The Stiller and Wilson duo does manage to generate laughs and the CGI is impressive but the template is as old as the museum antiques.

VERDICT: Consistently amusing but far from being a must-see.

**ERAGON** (M)

DIRECTOR: Stefen Fangmeier
STARRING: Ed Speleers, Jeremy Irons



Not even the razor-sharp CGI dragon action can save this *LOTR*-lite crap. Even the sub-par *Dragonheart* was more entertaining than this.

VERDICT: If you unplug your brain the pretty CGI might warrant a rental.



FILM



■ DH4 pitch "it'll be like that bit in *Terminator 2* where they drove a police bike into a chopper... but BETTER!"



■ "Hang in there Bruce, we've got someone chasing your toupee"

CINEMA

DIE HARD 4.0 (Rating TBC)

■ Director: Len Wiseman Starring: Bruce Willis, Timothy Olyphant, Maggie Q, Justin Long, Jeffrey Wright, Kevin Smith

Die Hard 4.0 (formerly known as *Live Free or Die Hard*) is the long-awaited fourth chapter of perhaps the most manly franchise in movies, *Die Hard*. Tired of dodging bullets, the grizzled John McClane has moved from the police force to Homeland Security where he spends his time tracking down computer hackers. Always the right guy in the wrong place at the right time, McClane stumbles onto a cyber-terrorist plot hatched by Thomas Gabriel (Timothy Olyphant of *Deadwood*) to cripple the nation by systematically disabling vulnerable computer infrastructure. A criminal mastermind, Gabriel has accounted for everything except a tough-as-nails ex-cop who knows a thing or two about giving terros a really bad day. Yippee-Kay-Aye! Opens August 2

COMING SOON

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

(Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Daniel Radcliffe
The boy wizard's fifth year of adventures at Hogwarts. Opens July 12

THE SIMPSONS MOVIE (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Dan Castellaneta
The longest running animated series in history hits the big screen. Opens July 26

BLACK SNAKE MOAN (Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Christina Ricci
Samuel L. Jackson tries to 'cure' a sexy, runaway sex-addict (Ricci, who spends most of the film in panties). Opens August 2

THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM

(Rating TBC)

■ STARRING: Matt Damon
Bourne travels from Moscow, Paris, Madrid and London to Tangier and New York as he continues his quest for the truth – all the while in the crosshairs. Opens August 23

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



TOY BOYS

Time Magazine has a revealed what we can expect from Pixar over the next few years. *WALL·E* will be the story of a robot in the year 2700, and a yet-to-be-named coming-of-old-age story about a 70-year-old globetrotting, villain-fighting senior citizen will open in 2009. *Toy Story 3* is due for release in 2010.



CONNERY OUT

Sean Connery will not return for the fourth *Indiana Jones* movie as "retirement is just too much fun." The veteran Scot was expected to suspend his five-year retirement for one last hurrah but has opted not to. It looks like he wants *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* to be his last movie. Sigh...



SHOOT 'EM UP

A trailer has appeared for *Shoot 'Em Up*, written and directed by Michael Davis and starring Clive Owen, Monica Bellucci and Paul Giamatti. It's being described as an action extravaganza, laced with black humour – a combination of John Woo ultra-violence, Sergio Leone westerns and *Looney Tunes*.



STAR POWER

Robert De Niro and Al Pacino will finally team up in *Righteous Kill*, playing two cops on the hunt for a serial killer. Apparently the idea for the film originated from the two actors' desire to co-star. The significance of this can't be underestimated – De Niro and Pacino are undoubtedly two of the best actors of their generation.



RITCHIE ROCKS

Guy Ritchie used to be the dog's bollocks of gangster movies. Until he married Madonna, that is, and she put a Kabala hex on anything he's done since. Ritchie's next flick, *RocknRolla*, centres on a Russian mobster and a crooked land deal putting millions of dollars into play, thus attracting London's entire criminal underworld.



LITTLE AND LARGE

Two new Sony Cams, two world firsts

SONY HDR-CX6EK, SONY HDR-SR8E

■ PRICE: \$TBC
■ WEB: www.sony.com.au

Whether you're looking for a pocket-sized movie-maker, or a full-on camcorder monster, one of these new Sonys should fit the bill. The HDR-CX6EK (left) is the world's smallest and lightest 1080i model, weighing in at just 370g without the battery. That's because it records straight to Memory Stick, so there's no hard drive or tapes adding weight. For Peter Jackson-style epics, meanwhile, the HDR-SR8E (right) packs a mammoth 100GB hard drive, the biggest of any camcorder yet, for capturing up to 38 hours of footage. That's almost enough for the average *OPA* big night out.



Whack in an 8GB Memory Stick Pro Duo and you can record just shy of three hours of continuous footage.



As well as adding to its portability, the use of a Memory Stick Pro Duo in the HDR-CX6EK means that you can slot the sticks straight into your PS3 and view pics on your TV.

HOME OF THE FUTURE



For the bedroom...
John Lewis Ultimate Preference TV Bed
Does your bed mechanically transform into a home cinema, with a 26-inch widescreen TV, DVD player and a motorised reclining mattress, at the push of a button? No? Then get yourself one of these... if you've won Lotto.
www.johnlewis.com



For the kitchen...
DuPont Corian Z Island
This is what catering facilities onboard the Starship Enterprise probably look like. The Z Kitchen Island unit has induction hob heating and a built-in PC for recipe hunting. If only it had the holographic food synthesiser too.
www.ernestomedia.com



Thanks to Visual Index, your movie can be split into chapters for easy scene finding, like a DVD. You can't add your own commentary though.



For the lounge...
Loewe Individual Compose TV
If you're looking for a high-spec HDTV with True HD image quality that looks just as good switched off, this customisable, 46-inch LCD from Loewe is just the ticket. Imagine how sexy *Heavenly Sword* would look on a setup like this.
www.loewe.com



Chairforce One
For a more immersive gaming experience why not try the Slouchpod interactive gaming chair? Twin speakers emit blood-curdling screams and the woofer makes you feel every gunshot like a body blow to the kidneys. It also looks like a crazy, giant boxing glove. Genius.
www.tots2teenagers.com



Singing Rainbows
Unless you're the sort of person who repaints rooms without removing their contents first, it's safe to assume that most of your gadgets are black. At just over 10cm tall, these stunning speakers are unobtrusive, but will brighten up your room and they sound great too.
www.audiopro.com

HELP

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA

Equip yourself with the right skills
to become the ultimate ninja



1 The Way of the Ninja

The first level is the same as the demo many of you have downloaded – except you won't have all the weapons – but we'll include it just in case you didn't. We open with the cut-scene which leads into a fight with two ninjas. These first guys are pretty easy and can be taken down with a couple of light attacks or one well-placed heavy attack. Take a look around and you'll find a chest. Follow the pink darts – they'll instruct you where to go. Note: there is a locked door on the ground. It's not for this level but take note of it.

Run up the wall, ledge creep and jump up. Follow the level around to the fallen tree. Walk up it fighting drone brown ninjas as you go. You'll probably work it out pretty quickly but the jump + \triangle attack is devastating, even at this early stage. A good tip if you're feeling surrounded is to keep jumping and slashing, then jump and slash some more. An airborne ninja's a whole lot less likely to get his arse stomped than one just standing there.

Wall run the gap, flip onto the branch for some cool acrobatic action or just jump it. You'll now learn the Flying Bird Flip, which is vital. Fight your way up, break any urns you see for yellow power.

Flying Bird Flip in quick succession up the tight walls to emerge from the tunnel and enter...

Ninja Fortress

Fight off the brown ninjas that attack. Also knock down the fire sticks. Yellow power lies therein. In the next room a gate slams shut and you know things are starting to get serious. Try to stay in the middle of the room and flip, attack, flip, attack. Fanging a few shuriken at the bastards when you're in the air or coming around for another slash attack isn't a bad trick either. Once the room is clear, open the chest for the map. Open the discoloured part of the wall – it's a "secret" door. The puzzles in this game aren't subtle. Fight your way through to a hallway. Kill ninjas and take note of a statue. It's missing its fanged faceplate and holding something in its closed hand. Again, not subtle. Open the chest and increase your health bar with the Lives of 1000 Gods. Follow the darts and go through the small opening.

This room is the first time you can really get killed (unless you just plain suck at games, in which case – stop playing now) as the white ninjas are introduced. They fight fast and nasty. Again, if you're in the air – you're not on

the end of a white ninja's sword. They're a lot faster and more deadly than the brown variety, exhibiting a disturbingly smart AI for this early in the game. After you've killed them all (there'll be some brown ones too) deliberately drop down the trapdoor to the storehouse.

Kill the bats that flutter around, they can give you blue health blobs, and get the statue mask from the chest. Make your way back up, open your chest for the Talisman of Rebirth, drop into the room and get back to the statue. Fang it up with the mask and get the Key of Courage. Go back to the room with the white ninjas. This time avoid the trapdoor like the plague. It's surprisingly easy to fall into when you're busy fending off the murderous advances of a white ninja. Slice the wall hanging and go through the newly found small entrance. In a room with stairs you'll find your first save point. Save, head up the stairs and use the key. It's time to fight a few white ninjas. As long as all three of them don't surround you, you'll be okay. Enter the door and fight the first boss.

BOSS: Murai (or "the bloke with the nunchucks")

This is probably one of the hardest first bosses in a game ever. He looks fat and

stupid. He's not. He's fast, fierce and can take you down in two or three blows. If this happens don't waste your life reviving Talisman here. Load the save point and try again. The key to this fight is blocking. In fact it feels a bit like a blocking tutorial. Keep block on for most of the time, roll around and hit him when he's not attacking. Don't get greedy. This isn't like the white ninjas where you keep on slashing. Chip away at this dude. The fight ends and the cut-scene shows you're, in fact, friends with this guy! Wait until you see the fights with people you don't like, or who don't like you! You won't have long to wait as this is level over.

2 The Hayabusa Ninja Village

Go back to the start of the level. The door that was closed before is now open. Go through it. Take the scroll from the altar – this is your first magic (or "Ninpo") scroll. Follow the instructions and balls of fire will circle around you. You're going to need them. The altar goes down. Get in the lift and do likewise. Wall run around, following the level's fairly obvious map. Open chest. Fight armoured ninja (you're going to be the quick or the dead





■ Ninja Tip 87 – DO NOT ask them for a 'short back and sides'

here). Walk, slide, swim, then get out of the water. Learn how to walk on water. It looks kind of goofy but it's useful. There's a chest behind the waterfall (there's always something behind waterfalls!), another chest on the riverbank. Use the save point. Follow the level around to...

The Village

There's an elixir in the alley directly to your left. Get it, take note of the statue with the missing head then go into the village proper. It gets really hairy really quickly. Guards and magic users shoot ninja magic crap at you. They can be blocked but they're annoying. This is the first hard-as-buggery fight, all we can say is block, slash, move and don't be afraid to use your magic. Find the head, take note of the stone missing the tablet groove, get another 1000 Gods health bar power-up and leap up onto the shonky roofs of the buildings.

After a cut-scene you'll have the bow and arrow. This can be used in two ways. Keep the **(A)** button held and aim in first-person or just jump and press **(A)** really quickly and shoot out a better version of the shuriken. This is a trifle hard to master so practise (although your arrows are limited). Drop down in the house you're in to find your first shop (the old man statue). Buy whatever you want (although we recommend bulking up on elixirs). Leave via the door. Fight four horsemen. These guys are as annoying as hell, but if you attack the horse, and not the man, you can knock them off their steeds. Another tactic is to shoot them with arrows but you have to be quick, and preferably in first-person, and then they're easier to take down. Or you could jump and arrow them off their rides. After the fight, shop. Save.

The fire has gone out now (you'll see it) and there's a great elixir to get. It's optional though, as what you really want to do is go to the right of the save point and fight the boss.

BOSS: Masakado (or "the big bloke on the horse")

This guy is essentially a demonic version of the horsemen you faced before. However you can't knock him off his steed. There are also magicians spawning. They just keep on spawning (eventually running out if you want to play it safe at about the 15-20 point). Wait until Masa attacks. Block or dodge it and either use your bow and arrow to shoot the rider or your sword attack on the horse. Blocking the guy's attacks are essential as they damage you greatly. Use any magic (or Ninpo) you have and just remain aware of the magic balls of annoying bastardness. You'll probably wear down the block button in this fight but it's not actually that hard once you get the rhythm down.

3 Skies of Vengeance

Okay, you've probably got the hang of how these levels work. It's quite linear – at least at this early stage. So we'll keep the next few level descriptions simple. The level opens with a cut-scene. As soon as play resumes save your game. Take the elixir. Head to the Living Quarters. Explore the rooms and get goodies (there should be a map of the area and various other goodies). You'll be fighting rather modern looking samurai that attack with guns. Block is your friend and also the decapitating jump (jump + forward + **(A)**). Keep following the level down the hall (it's redundant to mention you'll continue to fight more ninjas).

Soon you'll come across the Wing Key. Pick it up and use it on the drawer of the main desk. Pick up the goodies (there should be a Life of 1000 Gods) fight the fight you're locked into. Follow the level through another room and a hallway. Head to the Captain's quarters, check the hallway room for a scarab. There's a clue on the desk. Take the lift down. Walk from the fore cabin to the



■ Ninja Tip 113 – DO NOT make fun of their tight leather pants

HARD AS NAILS

WARNING: *Ninja Gaiden: Sigma* is like a beautiful lotus flower. A beautiful lotus flower that, when you sniff it, stabs you in the eye with poisoned barbs and releases billions of nano-bots that slowly eat your brain from the inside out.

And then it steals all your beer and kicks you in the groin.

It's hard is what we're saying here. And as much as we enjoy a right, royal challenge – there are moments in this game where you'll feel like hurling the controller, the PS3 and in fact yourself off something high. Just to relieve the agonising tension.

Having said that, if you own the game – this guide will give you some tips to get through it. But bring your "A" game to the table – a lot of this will depend on mad game playing skills. As *Sigma* makes *Devil May Cry 3* on HARD look like *LocoRoco*. You've been warned...

helm. Take another lift. Get ready for a big fight in cramped quarters. See the shop dude, but try to save your money for upgrading your Dragon Sword. Fight in the lower levels and get the ID card.

Use the card to open the card key door, get Dragon's Claw and Tiger Fang weapons from one of the crates (it's weaker than the Dragon Sword but heaps faster and can be upgraded). Follow the map to the middle cabin. Upgrade your Dragon Sword if you can. Outside: use the bow and arrow. Jump into the broken window room. Destroy all the machines in the engine room.

A loudspeaker hoots out its disapproval. All the doors open and a big fight ensues. The Dragon Sword – if upgraded – is your best bet. Especially if you have bought some techniques. After the fight, pat yourself on the back, take the Lives of 1000 Gods and use it. Get the scarab from atop the boxes. Head up the ladder and pull lever. Up the ladder again and...

BOSS: Dynamo (or "the metal bloke with the nasty gun")

This is not a tough fight. Dynamo will shoot at you in a circular formation. Just run a little bit ahead of the plasma blasts. The big metal dude needs a break after that so that's when you should stick things in him. Combos are always going to take more damage off him than one or two thrusts. Another attack he does is to swat you with his big gun arm, but you can block this. The final move he makes is creating a forcefield around himself. Just stay back. Wait for it to go away and move in for the extreme ninja kill! Don't get greedy. Move in, attack, move out. When he carks it you will be in...

4 Imperial City Infiltration

Go into the city. You need to head to Han's Bar. But there's a

lot of fighting to be done before then. Get Guillotine Grab (check out the pedestal). It needs a tablet. Open the chests, then the big door, then the big red door. Drop downstairs to get the stone tablet. Head left at bottom. Follow the town down. Shimmy to a blue orb and go to...

Clock Tower Plaza

Follow the blue lights upstairs, fight armoured ninjas – this is a hairy bit. After they're done take the red orb to upgrade one of your magics. Enter Han's Bar where an NPC rattles on for a bit. Go back and save when you beat the non-spawning punks. You need to find the windmill shuriken – it's across from the bar. Jump up the walls of some buildings and wall jump three times to get to it. This is tough stuff but the weapon's worth it, so have a crack.

Follow the level around collecting Lunar, bladed nunchucks, health, arrows, blue orbs and a scarab. Climb the ledge, jump into a hard room. Using arrows mid air packs quite a punch. Get over two gaps and find yourself above the crazy looking colourful door.

Pleasure Bit

Is anything but. Hardcore demons followed by bad dudes on motorbikes (TIP: Use fire balls to knock them off their bikes). Beat them and meet the busty Rachel: fiend hunter. Her breasts never stop wobbling. It's mesmerising. The dudes at Team Ninja evidently put a lot of love into those breasts. Cue: Lots of exposition and she bugs off. You'll meet some French bloke and that wraps up this level...

5 Fiend Hunter

Now you'll be playing as Rachel. She's busty and brave but nowhere near as fast or agile as her ninja chum. One good thing is all of her levels

are very straightforward IF you know what your objective is. If you don't, you can often find yourself wandering about going, "Why am I here again?" Go along the straight road, go right to get some health – up some stairs you'll find the monastery key. Use the shop and buy lots of health. You're about to find out why they call you the fiend hunter and not "Biggins McBoob-a-shakey".

The key is down the first right from plaza. Go near the monastery to cue monsters. Use your grappling hook mid-air to stun the creatures, then use your insanely massive hammer to crush them, before light attacking them and knocking off their heads.

Save, get health from a dead ninja and a chest. There's a shop in the annex. Go up the stairs, leap the gap, then sort out the bats at the end of the hall. There's health and then you'll have another massive battle with fiends. If you kill them all you get... a long flowing blonde wig. Er... awesome? Anyway, save and walk into the monastery.

Altar Hall

Open the box with health and another life. Head to the archive to fight a bunch of black ninjas. Interact with the upstairs paintings. Cue a long cut-scene and you've finished this level.

6 City of Fiends

You're Ryu again. Drop down, get more chests with life and such. Keep walking, fighting enemies as you go (if you have the windmill shuriken you can often decapitate a foe after first belting them around with your sword). Head down to the bar – where you have another chance to get the windmill shuriken if you haven't yet. There should also be a scarab in the area. Fight your way back to the Clock Plaza.

Go to the Lily door. Use the blue



■ This screenshot would be much better without that dagger... or the axe... or the dragons... or her pants!



stripes to guide where you should go (blue is always a clue – and rhymes, which is awesome). When you see the shopkeeper next you should have at least five scarabs. He will give you the Amulet of Potency. If you have a bit of cash left around buy the wooden sword. It is almost completely useless, but if upgraded ten times (that's seven times more than any other weapon) it will become the game's most powerful weapon. Of course this will take hundreds of thousands of dollars to do... good thing we can tell you how to do it in part two of this game guide! But more on that later... run, fight, get life from chest and head up the old...

Moat Road

Monsters appear. Make them dead. A door is locked and needs a Pegasus key. Move on, using the fire magic to kill the motorbike ninjas. Go along to...

Drawbridge Square

Go to the blue door, fighting all the way (just assume you'll be fighting unless stated otherwise). After the slashy donnybrook you'll find the Pegasus Key. Open the door, pull the switch and the drawbridge goes down. Follow on, up the stairs. Now, there's a good chance you're hurting at this stage so you'll really want to avoid the ninjas with explosive darts. Take the right path for a scarab and some health in a chest. It's not the way you want to go but it's a good pick-me-

up. You'll be ambushed when you take the left path. We normally wouldn't advise it, but you're about to face a really tough boss battle, so – if you can – avoid the various explosive fanging ninjas and just keep running. Use the windmill shuriken from the air if it gets too hairy and remember you're a ninja! Wall run, leap, roll. Be evasive. You'll find another elixir. Get in the gate. Fight two bike ninjas with sidecars (annoying but use the windmill shuriken – it's perfect as it never runs out). Anyway, try not to lose any health as now you'll fight...

MINI BOSSES: Three Fiends (or "those big red raptor looking things")

It would not be a bad assumption that these are the big bosses. We can tell you they're not though, so try and avoid using any magic. They look scary, and there're three of them (and they respawn – making it an actual total of six!), but if you keep them from clumping, chuck arrows at them when you jump, roll into their crotches and slice and dice, you should have the measure of these creatures. Sigh with relief as you've obviously finished the level and... WHA-?

MAIN BOSS: Hydracubus (Or "the big phallic slimy dude that looks like a doodle with eyes, man...")

Sucks to be Ryu – or you about now – as this is the toughest battle yet. Especially if the fiends before it wore you down. Oh well, no rest for the ninja. Use your windmill shuriken (or Frisbee of Doom as we like to call it) to chip away at its health and, when you think you have an opening, jump in and whale on the beast's whip-like tentacles. A few hits, or one really kick arse combo, should knock the tentacle off. Repeat the process with the other one and the slimy sucker will be vulnerable... for about nine seconds. But being eviscerated with a ninja sword even for only nine seconds does hurt the beast. But then he grows the tentacles back. If you're about to croak use your magic near him. This will often knock the tentacles off. Repeat the process until he's done. It should take about four goes. Note: as the slimy monster feels himself dying he'll start shooting big globs of slimy hurties from the top of his head. Just dodge them. They look silly but they hurt. When you finally finish this nasty off you'll have finished the level.

Well, that's it for the first instalment of the *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* playguide. Tune in next month for the rest – including a tip that can upgrade every single one of your weapons to full. Interested? See you next month. ▶

**EXPECT PART 2
NEXT ISSUE!**



■ Ninjas, boobies AND zombies? This game's got everything



■ "What? My foot odour can't be that bad"

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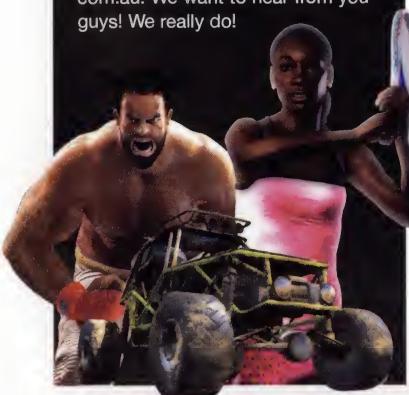
RE-PLAY

Think you've seen and done everything in your game collection? Wrong!

WHAT IS RE-PLAY?

Re-Play is for those lonely games left on the shelf; those poor little buggers gathering dust. All they want is to be touched... caressed... given the attention they so sorely deserve. Come on people, don't break their tiny little hearts; even games need a second chance. Re-Play is their safe haven, their refuge. We want to explore every nook and cranny for the cool stuff you never noticed the first time round, or the second, or the third...

But Re-Play is also for the newbies, for the games that require our full attention, games that deserve more than a quick run-through before being traded in for a fistful of cold hard cash. We urge you to hold up for a second. Partake in one of our official challenges, compete against your gaming brethren in a reader challenge, look for something new and entertaining in your games, and above all, drop us a line regarding your gaming exploits at OPS@derwenthoward.com.au. We want to hear from you guys! We really do!



OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

GOD OF WAR II

All right, so we're thinking that you peeps have probably completed *God of War II* and are a-hankering after a 'titanic' challenge to warm your cockles. Look no further, peeps. We got your challenge right here,

The challenge is as simple as they come, and we really want you guys to go all out on this one. Try and get the highest combo possible. If you can, take a picture, and send it to us by post or email at the usual address. Since *God of War II*'s pause button takes you into the upgrade menu, it's going to be especially difficult to get photographic evidence for this task. We suggest maybe getting your brother/mother/friend/girlfriend involved to help you out.

It's a tricky one, but a bit of planning could go a long way. Think of places in the game where there are enough enemies on-screen to really start racking up the big numbers. Luke and Phil are our resident combo kings and they both managed to get numbers over 500. We reckon it's more than possible to get a score of over a thousand if you put some time and thought into it. So get cracking and send it to us under the headline 'God of War II Challenge'.



OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

LOCOROCO

Come on guys. What the hell is wrong with you? We issued the *LocoRoco* challenge aaaaaaaaages ago, and we waited with bated breath for the entries to roll in, but nothing. What's wrong with *LocoRoco*? Are you to 'cool' to play it, huh? Are you afraid your friends will point and laugh? Your loss buddy, that's what we say. Okay, so it's a little bit girly, and enormous squishy singing blobs with gumdrop smiles can get a bit annoying sometimes, but it's awesome and we think you should play it.

Annnnnnyway... after waiting for weeks and weeks we finally got an entry, and after rabidly fighting over who got to open the entry we were pleased to discover that the time was a ridiculously good one. The challenge was to complete the very first level of *LocoRoco* as quickly as possible. Mark spent a good couple of hours and got a time of 1:07.60, which he was pretty damn proud of, he really was.

Predictably, the one entry we received for this challenge completely smashed Mark's record. So congratulations to Drew Lowe who nipped in at the last minute with a barnstorming time of 1:02.88. Well done. We'd like to keep this thing going for a while longer though, if anyone thinks they can beat Drew, feel free to give it a bash and send in a pic to the usual address under the headline 'LocoRoco Challenge'. To reiterate, the stage is world one, level one - get going!

OFFICIAL CHALLENGE

TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

The PS2 truly is the little machine that could. Just when you think it has had its last 'hurrah', yet another game is released that extends its lifespan that little bit further. The latest in a long line of games to do so is *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*. This game surprised us for a number of reasons. Firstly, since most remakes are crap, and the result of lazy development teams cashing in on a quick buck, *Anniversary* shocked us by being awesome. Secondly, the level design hasn't dated a bit, and actually outstrips most games in the adventure genre today.

Thankfully the time trial mode has returned from *Legend*, so this challenge consists of a good old-fashioned speed run. Players can unlock cheats by beating certain times in specific levels. Our challenge focuses on the very first level. To get the cheat here you have to beat the level in less than five minutes. Sadly, we suck so hard we couldn't even do that. The time to beat in this challenge is 5:20, which is easily our crappiest attempt. If you reckon you can beat this time have a bash, send the pics to the usual address marked 'Tomb Raider Challenge'.



CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Seen something funny in a game? Send it in!

ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Ever fancy being an evil, twisted, morally bankrupt, bloodsucking scumbag? Well apparently it is easy to get a law degree these days, but if you're a total dumbass, or don't have the HECS equity to fund such an endeavour, you could simply purchase *Oblivion* and become a vampire. Yep, that's right, for all you emos out there, locked up in your room, pasty and pale, cutting yourself so you can feel – now is your chance to fulfil one of your life ambitions. It's pretty simple: you can become a vampire by merely fighting the blood-hungry fiends and becoming infected, or you can strike up a deal with Vicente Valtieri through the dark brotherhood quests and become a vampire that way.

Just be aware that it is a hard life. Vampires must constantly feed on the blood of humans to survive, and your resistance to sunlight and fire will dramatically decrease the longer you stay in a vampiric state. On the other hand you do eventually look totally Bela Lugosi badass with your red eyes and pasty white skin; most of your skills will also receive a boost – increasing exponentially in accordance with how long you survive as a vampire.

Just be aware – finding a cure for vampirism is extremely difficult and time consuming, so save previous to your transformation.



GTA: SAN ANDREAS



Stupid October, why the hell do you have to be so far away? Sitting there all smug. You're the tenth month, what the hell? Why can't you be the eighth, or even the seventh month? Damn you Caesar and your need for a stupid Roman calendar. If you had just liberally removed a couple of months here and there, we would already be playing *GTAIV*, as opposed to looking at screenshots salivating.

Anyway, to take our mind off things we've been having some 'sexy time' with *San Andreas*, hoping those long lonely months will somehow take care of themselves. Having spent well over 300 man hours between us playing this gargantuan masterpiece we thought we'd seen it all. Predictably, we were wrong. After somehow managing to climb up the huge bridge connecting San Fierro to Las Venturas we thought we'd maybe get some sort of reward, but to no avail. In fact the developers seem to find the whole thing hilarious, evidenced by their message at the summit of the bridge, and we quote: "There are no Easter Eggs up here. Go away."

MOTORSTORM

Enough with the *MotorStorm* already, we hear you cry, especially from those unfortunate souls who haven't yet had the pleasure of what is possibly the best looking game on the market right now. Thing is though, we continue to get some awesome crash pics from readers, and we feel it is only fair to share. There are a couple of Bobby Dazzlers in this month's selection, check it out:



Pic 1: Heh heh. Yeah, he's sleeping on a moving car, why would he do that? That's stupid.



Pic 2: Heh heh. He's probably broken his neck and will live in pain for rest of his life. What a loser.



Pic 3: Heh heh. He's going to die in horrible, horrible circumstances. That's kinda cool.

MOST ANNOYING SIDEKICKS

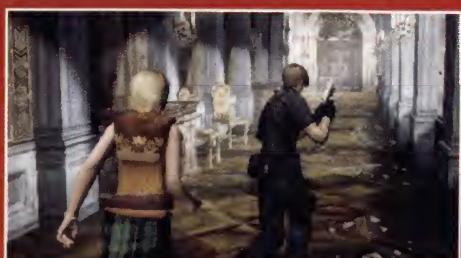
Check out these stupid, crappy, tag-along little bitches who should just go die in a fire. Harsh, we know...



Ico Chick: Remind us why the hell we're supposed to be rescuing you? Say something! Do something! Anything you flimsy, frigid cowbag. We hate you.



Sparx: You are NOT funny, you suck balls and you're stupid; the equivalent of an annoying mate who tries way too hard to be funny. Go away.



Ashley: You're hot, and have an awesome set of sweater puppets, but can you please just SHUT YOUR STUPID WHINY VOICE UP FOR JUST ONE SECOND!

CHEATS

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ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Item duplication

Get two magic scrolls of the same type. The scrolls must NOT be stolen. Click on the scroll twice, then drop the item from your inventory that you want duplicated. Exit the inventory and collect your items. Certain weapons and armor won't work. The condition of the item must be 100. Get it repaired just to be safe. The charge on a magical items must also be full.

Sneak Master glitch

You can easily get Master Sneak level to aid in your plundering and assassinating endeavours. To do this, simply find a door that doesn't take you to a loading screen when opening it (Fort Urasek has a perfect place for this). Simply go into sneak and walk against the door continuously. Your level will increase as long as you are not heard. This means that if you are below Journeyman and you sneak too fast you will be heard. All you'll have to do is sneak off until you hear the fight music turn itself off, then sneak back over and continue with the trick.

It's possible to cheat further and use a paperclip or sticky tape to hold the stick forward so you don't have to sit there holding it yourself. When doing this it's wise to check back once every hour or half hour to press **X** when you get to each new Sneak level. Leave it overnight and by morning you should be a Master at Sneak. With this level of Sneak you can steal from enemies easily, as well as deliver a mighty 6x damage boost to your attacks. If enemies have high security, or another enemy sees you whacking away at an enemy, you stand a chance of getting caught, but if you keep sneaking or use an invisibility spell, you can sneak away and they'll lose track of you. High damage bow and arrow combinations are the best for this technique.



PS3 PS2 PSP

TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM

Always Special

PointHogger

Mini Skater

DownTheRabbitHole

Unlock All Skaters

ImInterfacing

Unlock All Boards & Outfits

RaidTheWoodshed

Full Boost

OotbaghForever

Unlock All Events

AdventuresOfKwang

Invisible Skater

NowYouSeeMe

Giganto-Skater

IWannaBeTallTall



PS3 PS2 PSP

TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY



Gold Lara

In Midas' Palace step onto Midas' hand (the one you use to turn the silver blocks into gold) and stay there for a short period of time. Soon you'll be transformed into solid gold

Style Units

Achieve 100 per cent completion on your profile by getting all artifacts and relics in the game to unlock the Style Units level

Golden Shotgun and Silver Mini SMGs

Beat all three Lost Island time trials

Infinite .50 Calibre Pistol Ammo and Show Enemy Health

Beat all four Peru time trials

Infinite Mini SMG Ammo and Infinite Health

Beat all three Egyptian time trials

Infinite Shotgun Ammo and All Weapons

Beat all four Greece time trials

Infinite Breath

Complete game on Easy difficulty

Sunglasses

Complete game on Easy difficulty

Textureless Mode

Complete game on Easy difficulty

Catsuit

Obtain the relic from the Sanctuary of the Scion

Classic

Obtain the relic from The Lost Valley

Camouflage suit

Obtain the relic from the Temple of Khamon

Croft Manor Sport

Obtain the Athenian Owl relic from Midas' Palace

Doppelganger Costume

Obtain relic from Natla's Mines

Golden

Obtain the Griffin-Head relic from Midas' Palace

Legend

Obtain the relic from the Mountain Caves

Scorched Natla

Find all relics

Swimsuit from TR2

Obtain relic from the Great Pyramid



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INTERACTION



Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg, the creators of the classic spoof *Shaun of the Dead* bring us their fantastic new flick *Hot Fuzz*, the hilarious tale of 2 police officers. Nicholas Angel (Simon Pegg) is one of the greatest officers that London has to offer – he is actually too good and is making all of the other officers look bad! Cue his transfer to the quiet crime free village of Sandford and the acquisition of a new partner, the eager Danny Butterman (Nick Frost). Sandford however does not stay quiet for long and sidekick Danny gets the chance to see Nicholas in action, finally experiencing the thrills he has been longing for!

To celebrate the release of the clever comedy *Hot Fuzz* on shelves July 18th, BLOCKBUSTER® is giving you the chance to win an action packed DVD pack featuring *Miami Vice*, *Smokin' Aces*, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and a *Hot Fuzz/Shaun of the Dead* double feature.

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ARCHIVE

All the games that matter on the PS3, PS2 and PSP!

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months

STRANGLEHOLD

Release: September

Hong Kong superheroes John Woo and Chow Yun Fat carve a huge path of destruction through the windy city of Chicago. Promises to be a violent ballet of bullets and bodybags. We just hope Midway doesn't choke. Get it? Strangle? Choke? Oh shutup, that was funny.

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

Release: October

It's almost too obvious to mention, but if you're not hanging out for Rockstar's latest opus, we'll personally come round to your home with a baseball bat and some lubricant – yeah... we'll go there. This game will rock the casbah – believe it.

GUITAR HERO III

Release: Late 2007

The legend continues. When the first batch of tracks were announced, we'll admit we got a fraction excited. A new multiplayer action-inspired battle mode, gruelling boss battles and 'Even Flow' by Pearl Jam? We're busting a nut for it.

ROCK BAND

Release: Late 2007

If there's one game that's stiffening our whammy bars even more than *Guitar Hero III* it's EA's *Rock Band*. Guitar, bass, drums and vocals? Rocking out with your mates in the same room, or fellow rockers online? It just can't fail. Hurry up and announce some of the tracks already!

PS2

"A lot was made of *Tomb Raider: Legend* being a return to Lara's roots, but *Anniversary* is the true owner of this accolade."

OFFICIAL SCORE:
09

TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

BURNOUT DOMINATOR

8 The reduced price-tag is tempered by the lack of crowd faves like Crash Mode, but it recaptures *B2*'s speed and *B3*'s intensity.

EVERYBODY'S TENNIS

7 Its lifespan may be short, but it's possibly the ideal family game that will put everybody on level pegging skill-wise.

FINAL FANTASY XII

10 This is the most superbly crafted RPG out there. You'd be completely mad to miss this one.

GOD OF WAR II

10 There is no reason not to own this game. Whack on some pants and go buy it now.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

9 No multiplayer or co-op, but a big improvement on *GTA: Liberty City Stories*. A fitting last hurrah. Can you feel it, coming in the air tonight?

GUITAR HERO II

10 *Guitar Hero II* is arguably the greatest PS2 game of 2006, and undoubtedly the gnarliest music game ever made.

MEDAL OF HONOR VANGUARD

6 A bit of a minger that fails to halt the franchise's fall from grace. Sticky controls and a lack of any original ideas signal a rushed product.

RICKY PONTING INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2007

8 An under-featured update of the PS2's best cricket game, but still an absolute cracker.

SBK-07: SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2007

8 A realistic and credible take on motorcycle racing, highly recommended for bike buffs.

SOCOM US NAVY SEALS: COMBINED ASSAULT

8 A solid tactical shooter – but it lacks any real progress from the last SOCOM game.

PSP

AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON

8 Cool, arcade-inspired action – faster than a whippet on 'roids.

CHILI CON CARNAGE

6 Good humour, dodgy controls. This chili needs a few more habaneros.

DRIVER 76

7 A heady mix of *Parallel Lines*' best bits, *Driver 76* breaks new ground for itself but not the genre.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES

10 Not only is this a brilliant game, it's arguably the second best *GTA* game available next to *San Andreas*. Get it now.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS

9 Forget *Acid*, this is the game *Metal Gear* fans have been waiting for.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: RIVAL SWORDS

9 A top-rate conversion that stands up to its PS2 big brother.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6

8 Fun, easy to play and challenging enough to offer real longevity.

ROCKY BALBOA

6 Likely only to disappoint fans of the movie. Shallow boxing mechanics and a general lack of depth illustrate an ultimate waste of the license.

V8 SUPERCARS 3: SHOOTOUT

7 It looks good, it sounds good and it has a stack of options – but the handling is more arcade than sim.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

7 Quick, slick and a joy to play – just a few frame niggles.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
08

RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

"Faithful to the series and a hoot to boot – nice."

PS3

ARMORED CORE 4

A very respectable mech game and a far better alternative to *Mobile Suit Gundam: Target In Sight*.

BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

It's not without its flaws, but if you want a whiff of the air up there you could do a lot worse.

CALL OF DUTY 3

Call of Duty 3 is a solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter. Grab a copy of *Resistance* instead and wait for *Call of Duty 4*.

DEF JAM: ICON

There's a lot to dislike about this game, yet somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun. Holla back! And so forth.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put – awesome.

ENCHANTED ARMS

Enchanted Arms is the first proper Japanese RPG for the PS3 and it's by no means a disappointment, but it's a quirky game.

F.E.A.R.

F.E.A.R. is a seriously chilling ride but the graphics could've been a LOT sharper.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

Still one of the best two-player games around, with visuals that will knock the wind out of you.

FORMULA ONE CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

F1CE looks awesome and plays just as well. F1 fans, you have been called.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES

Battlelines is a game that brims with potential but fails to live up to it. Shallow fun if you're up for it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE

Flashy graphics can't hide the plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE

It's next gen as all hell. On PS2 it was damn good – on PS3 it's a must-have!

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT

A rubber Godzilla of a title that looks uncooked, plays stiffly and provides no satisfaction. What a pipe blocker!

MOTORSTORM

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3.

NBA 2K7

Technically the best b-ball sim on the street, but that won't mean much to average punters.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

Homedcourt is the brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet. Instant fun.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but still a solid racer and worth a look for series fans.

WHY GET IT?

- It's ridiculously stylish
- Wasting goons is rarely this enjoyable

- Darklings (they're sadistic little buggers)
- Tentacles (they're cool)
- Black holes (you can make them)

VERDICT:

Stunning, original and gory as all hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.

OFFICIAL SCORE:
09



MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



THE GAME: Guitar Hero II

THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 2

THE YEAR: 2006

THE MOMENT: Finishing most games is, at the very least, a minor magic moment. You do get a certain sense of accomplishment that you don't get at the end of a film or, arguably, a book.

It's not a passive exercise. You need to beat it.

Some games feel better to finish than others. Some games have better endings than others. But few end as poignantly as *Guitar Hero II*.

We know we bang on about this game ad nauseum, but this is Magic Moments – and we'll be damned if the dying moments of *Guitar Hero II*'s career mode aren't magical.

If you've played it, you'll know what we mean. If you haven't, picture this. You're at Stonehenge. You've just blown the minds of everyone present with a killer set. The gods of rock are looking benevolently down upon you – you've done them proud. You've done ROCK proud.

But the crowd wants one more. They chant. Freebird, Freebird...

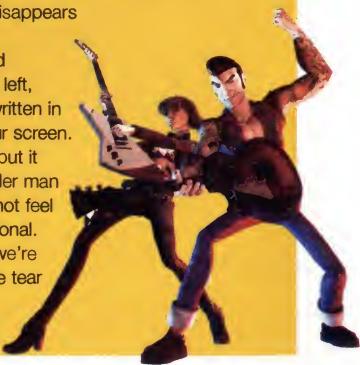
You walk back out on stage, and the sweaty mob goes wild. It sends shivers down your spine.

You nail it, your fingers are a blur – for eight minutes you're a god among men. When you're done, the alien mothership now hovering above you lifts you from the stage and disappears into space.

'Live and Let Rock' is left, glistening, written in stars on your screen.

It's silly, but it takes a harder man than we to not feel a little emotional.

In fact, we're feeling a little tear coming on now...



NEXT

SPEED SPECIAL

Next month we pit *Juiced 2* against *Need for Speed ProStreet* against *Colin McRae DIRT* to decide 2007's ultimate racing champ!



- Our biggest ever playable PlayStation 3 demo disc!
- Huge 2007 PlayStation preview from LA's insane E3 games show!
- First reviews of *GRAW2*, *Colin McRae: Dirt* and more!

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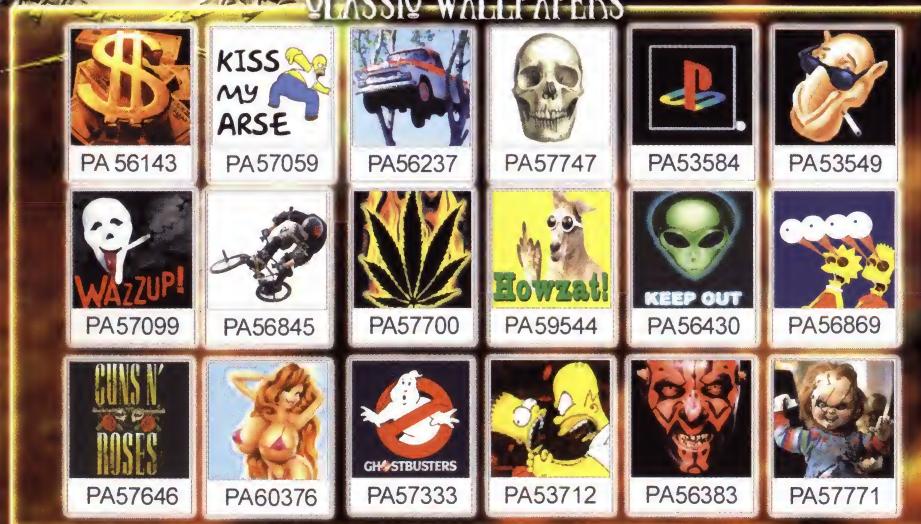
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JAVA GAMES



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PA 43425 PA 46956 Bibanna ft .Jay-

PA43329 PA46006 Avril Lavigne - Girlfriend

PA43254	PA43258	Christina Aguilera - Candyman
PA43318	PA46944	Fergie Feat. Ludacris - Glamorous
PA43424	PA46943	Mika - Grace Kelly
PA43330	PA46007	Plnk - Leave Me Alone (I'm Lonely)
PA43358	PA46954	Maroon 5 - Makes Me Wonder
PA43418	--	Powderfinger - Lost And Running
PA43400	--	Dean Geyer - If You Don't Mean It
PA43334	PA46013	Beyoncé Feat. Shakira - Beautiful Liar
PA43253	PA43253	Gwen Stefani Feat. Akon - The Sweet Escape
PA43188	--	Nelly Furtado - All Good Things (come To...)
PA43309	--	Silverchair - Straight Lines
PA43350	PA46030	Linkin Park - What I've Done
PA43291	--	Camille Jones vs Fedde Le Grand - Creeps
PA42711	--	Kt Tunstall - Suddenly I See
PA43409	PA43254	Justin Timberlake - What Goes Around...
PA43397	--	Rob Thomas - Little Wonders
PA43314	PA43302	Timbaland / Furtado / Timberlake - Give It...
PA43373	PA46028	Gym Class Heroes - Cupid's Chokehold

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